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THE WALNUT COLLECTOR

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# THE WALNUT COLLECTOR

BY  
MACIVER PERCIVAL

749  
P4177

DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY  
NEW YORK    ❧    ❧    ❧    1927

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## PREFACE

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The *Walnut Collector* deals with the furniture made in England, between 1660 and 1730, of walnut and similar woods.<sup>1</sup>

This period is a most interesting one, as it includes the years during which English furniture makers, abandoning the traditions of their forebears, were learning all they could from their foreign compeers. They assimilated the methods of continental craftsmen so well that towards the close of the period a new style of English domestic furniture had come into being.

This book, like all the other volumes of the "Collector Series", has been written for those men and women who do not wish to pay large

<sup>1</sup> The *oak* furniture of the period has been dealt with in the *Oak Collector*, MacIver Percival. (Messrs. Herbert Jenkins, Ltd.)

prices for their acquisitions, and who cannot afford to make expensive mistakes.

These collectors like to search for their quarry in out of the way villages, in second-hand furniture shops, and among the dusty stocks of country dealers, which is a much more interesting way of acquiring a collection than to buy it more or less *en bloc*.

If success is to be achieved, however, by this method the buyer must be equipped with a thorough knowledge of what he is searching for, and should endeavour by every means in his power to acquire a *flair* which will enable him to recognise, under the disguise perhaps of paint and disfiguring upholstery, the lines which are characteristic of his chosen period.

I have tried in this book to give him the information he needs as far as it can be given in print and by photographs, and I have illustrated as many types, both simple and elaborate, as possible.

The originals of many of the illustrations are in the Victoria and Albert Museum,<sup>1</sup> others are the property of Messrs. Phillips, Ltd., of Hitchin, and some are in private hands. Those which have no source of origin indicated are in my collection.

<sup>1</sup> These are distinguished by the letters "V and A."

My grateful thanks are offered: to Mr. H. W. Lewer, F.S.A., the editor of this series, for his unfailing help and kindness, both in reading the proofs and in choosing the illustrations.

To Messrs. Phillips, Ltd., Hitchin, for the loan of photographs.

To Miss Scott for permission to use the photographs reproduced in Plates XXVII.

To Miss Mary Lowe for her drawing reproduced in Figure 14.

MACIVER PERCIVAL.





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THE WALNUT COLLECTOR

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## CHAPTER I

### THE CHARACTERISTICS OF WALNUT FURNITURE

---

**W**ALNUT furniture in England dates back certainly to the sixteenth century, possibly earlier. Probably some of the great quantity of domestic furniture made of this wood that is mentioned in sixteenth century inventories was of foreign workmanship imported complete from the continent. More may have been constructed here by the many foreign workmen who plied their crafts under the protection of the Tudor sovereigns, but some of this pre-Restoration walnut furniture which survives is most certainly of native make, inspired by the old English traditions of workmanship, and closely resembling that made of oak at the same period in ornament and construction.

The furniture made from walnut wood under the late Stuarts with which this book is concerned, however, marks a different era. It is furniture which was made to minister to a new mode of life—a style of living in which the arts of reading and writing and the methodical and orderly conduct of affairs had become the property of the ordinary man who was in no way learned or literary. He carried on his business with some regard to punctuality, made notes in his diary, had his table tidily set with knives and napkins ready for his guests, and liked to have, as Pepys says, everything “neat and handsome about him”.

There were, of course, still plenty of people who never read or wrote a line, who got up and went to bed by the sun, and who continued to lead, to a considerable extent, the more or less primitive existence of their ancestors. For them the straight-backed chairs, the dresser sideboard and the shovel-board table, all made of solid oak, sufficed and continued to be made.

It was the case of “Town Mouse and Country Mouse.” For the townsman and those of the more sophisticated of the country people who were in touch with St. James’s, walnut furniture was made, while much country-made furniture was of oak.

During the Age of Walnut we find three kinds of walnut furniture: that imported from abroad, that made by foreign workmen in England, and that made by English craftsmen following to some extent foreign methods. These native workmen were continually modifying the Continental designs to suit English conditions, and following, too, that best tradition of English craftsmanship: that construction must take precedence of decoration, and that elaborate ornamentation on a badly made piece only accentuates its poor quality.

At first, however, our workmen had much to learn in that side of their art which needed precision and perfect accuracy rather than boldness and free handling of masses. The problem of combining strength with lightness was, especially as regards the structure of chairs, constantly a matter of experiment, which towards the end of the period triumphantly produced the spoon-backed cabriole-legged dining chair.

We have numerous names of foreigners who made Court furniture here during the period 1660-1730, in fact many of the names which are most prominent have a foreign twang, though they are generally anglicised after a time. Dutchmen and Frenchmen seem to have



provided the greater number of the foreign carvers and cabinet makers who helped to make furniture for, and otherwise adorn, the multitudes of houses which were springing up everywhere.

When we consider the many factors at work, it is hardly to be wondered at that it is a matter of extreme difficulty to place all the varieties of furniture in exact chronological order. There are, however, several points in construction which help very considerably in classifying pieces in which they occur.

The stretchers and legs of chairs and other pieces of furniture which possess them, such as tables and stands, all move together to a considerable extent.

Then there is the construction of drawers which, whether in cabinets or bureaux or anything else, mark the class to which they belong.

The arrangement of the mouldings and edges of the drawers, while hovering on the verge of ornament, is another point to be noticed.

It would be very tedious to reiterate these points in connection with the history of each individual piece of furniture, and they are here

given in a general form which applies to everything of which they form part.

Up to the beginning of the walnut period the usual methods employed by English wood workers for joining together the parts of a piece of furniture was by means of the mortise and tenon joint further secured by wooden pegs.

Framed up panelling bore no inconsiderable part in the construction of furniture. Glue and metal nails were hardly used at all, though the drawers of the late oak period, made with either flush or halved joints were secured with hand-made nails.

During the last half of the seventeenth century these methods were almost abandoned for Court furniture. There was not only a change of wood and a change of fashion in design but a complete alteration in workshop methods as the cabinet-maker and chair-maker superseded the joiner. The dovetail joint came into common use, glue was used to attach veneer and for fine joints, and strength was attained by close attention to the fitting together of well balanced parts rather than by massiveness and weight of material.

*Drawers.*—The drawers of the walnut period are of much higher finish than those of earlier



times. The method of securing the corners is by means of dovetailing, at first only in part, but towards the end of the seventeenth century all the corners are so joined. The character of

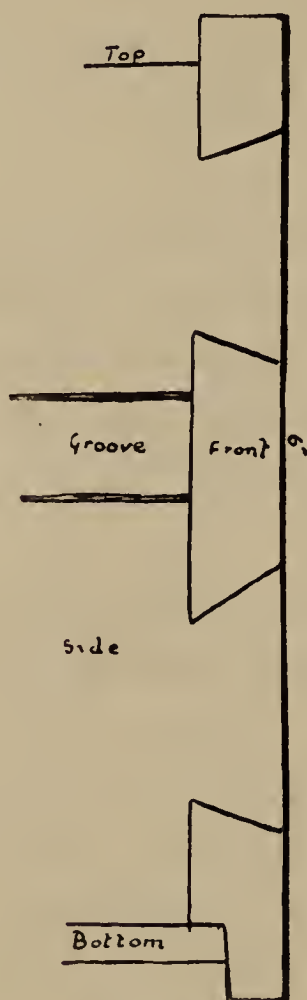


FIGURE 1.

DOVETAILS FROM WALNUT CHEST OF DRAWERS, *c.* 1675.  
(Half size).

the dovetailing is an indication of the date of the piece. In the reign of Charles II it was of Dutch character, which is somewhat coarse, about three tails in each side joint of an ordinary

small drawer, as Figure 1. These tails were in many cases carried right through to the surface of the foundation of the drawer, being, of course, covered by the veneer as in Figures 1 and 2.

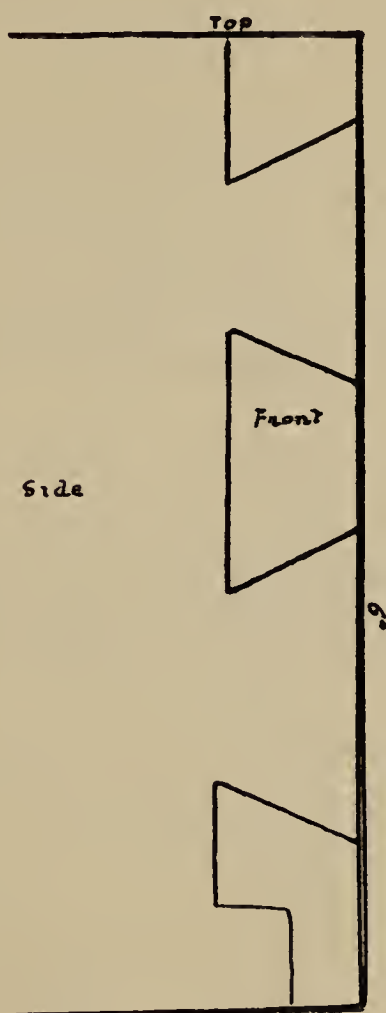


FIGURE 2.

DOVETAILS FROM WALNUT CHEST OF DRAWERS, *c.* 1675.  
(Half size).

In some examples, it will be found that the veneer is loose over these dovetails, having originally been attached to the end of the grain,

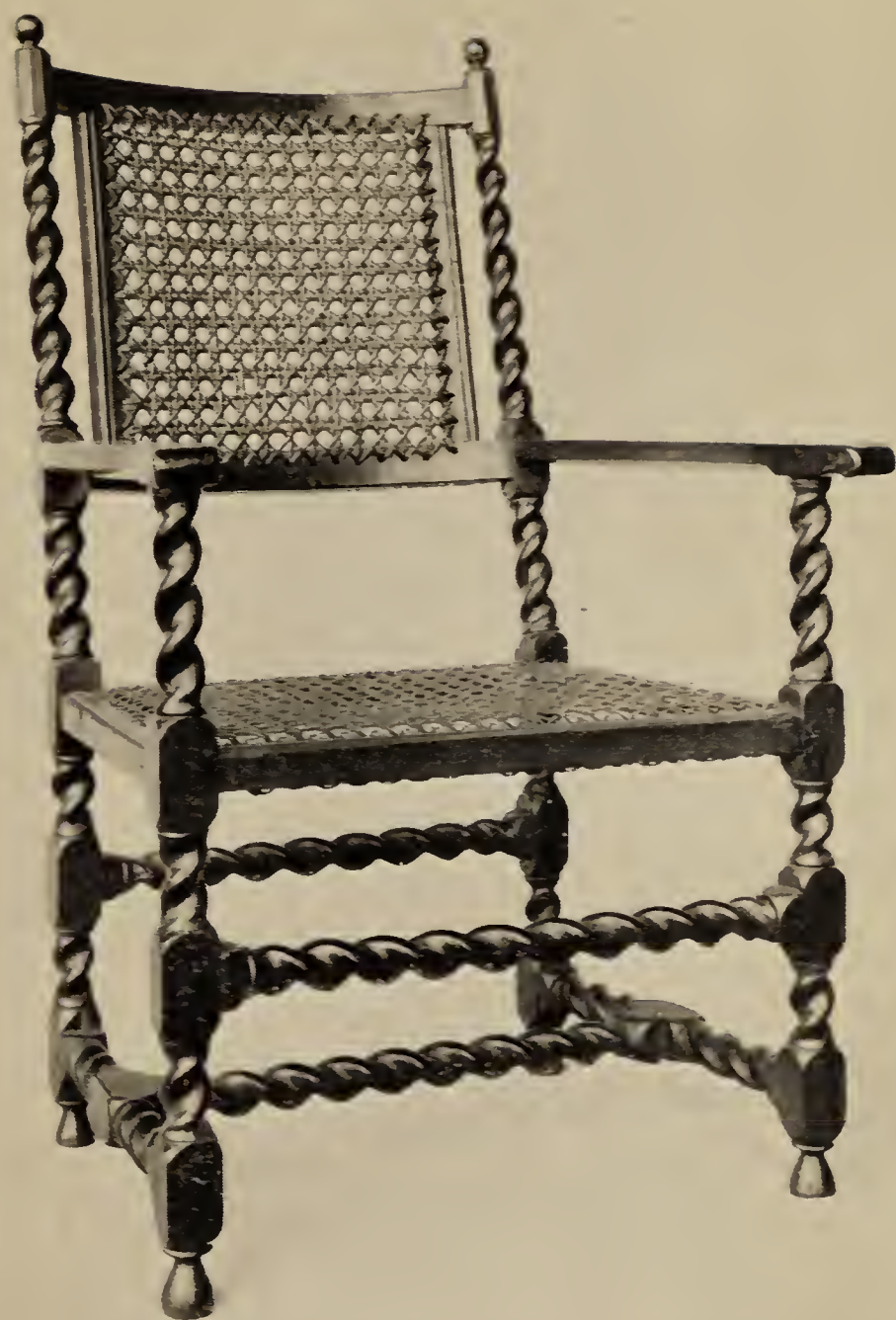
## PLATE I

## ARMCHAIR

This is an early example of walnut, dating from the Commonwealth period. The caning is a replacement, but the original caning must have been just as open. Such a wide-spaced mesh usually points to an early origin.

*Height 3' 5". Width 2' 1½". Depth 1' 5¾".*

[V. AND A.]





which does not take glue well. This "Dutch" dovetail does not invariably prove a Charles II origin, as it is found sometimes on fairly late pieces, which probably emanate from workshops where a Dutchman was master or foreman. The bottoms of early drawers have the grain running from front to back and follow the old

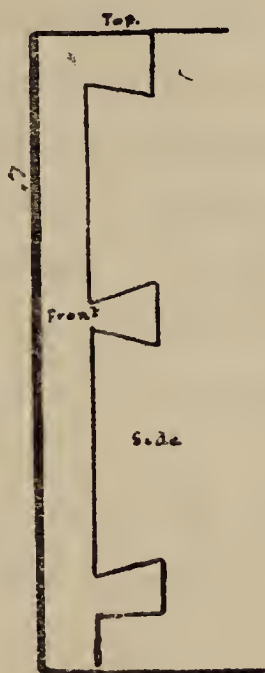


FIGURE 3.

DOVETAILS FROM DRAWER OF BUREAU, *c.* 1695. (Half size).

method of fashioning, being nailed on, and in some cases running in grooves cut in the sides of the drawers. Such pieces are certainly English made and probably early.

Later, from about the reign of William and Mary, the dovetailing begins to get finer and



stops short of the front, leaving a clear surface for the veneer to be glued on. (Fig. 3).

The finer the dovetail, the nearer to the end of the walnut period, is the general though not invariable rule. Wide dovetails are sometimes later than fine work.

The best work generally has the drawers lined with oak, but in many very good pieces the fronts of drawers otherwise made of oak, are of deal, which affords a good surface for veneer; oak is more apt to warp than soft wood, and unless very perfectly seasoned may throw the veneer off. Such drawers also balance better than those having a heavy oak front which has a tendency to throw the drawer forward.

The edges of the drawers of good pieces are generally nicely rounded off, feeling pleasant and smooth to the touch.

The edges of early drawers simply fit the opening more or less closely, sliding in and out like a box of matches up to about 1715, after that date until the end of the walnut period one finds the drawer edges projecting over the sides of the drawer so as to make it much more dust-proof.

It was, however, rather a fragile edge, and a "cock beading" which protected the delicate

edge of the cross cut bandings was a more useful expedient. This was introduced somewhere about 1700, but was not common until about 1715.

*Mouldings.*—The early furniture with drawers had a single semi-circular moulding or beading on the carcase between the drawers, this is found up to about 1700. From about 1690 one sometimes finds a double row of narrow beading, taking up approximately the same space as the single half round moulding used earlier. After about 1700 this is the more usual form until about 1715 when the use of these mouldings planted on the carcase was abandoned. They are of walnut cut across the grain glued on a thin backing of deal with the grain running lengthways, as are all walnut mouldings, the grain showing better thus.

*Turning.*—Turning was much in use for various purposes until the end of the seventeenth century, when it became less common as it did not adapt itself to the curves which pervaded everything.

Turning of the usual type is carried on by a cutting edge held against the rapidly revolving wood fixed firmly in position in a lathe. As the wood goes round, the cutting chisel, being held in one place during numerous revolutions,

gradually deepens the groove and is then moved from one point to another until the whole pattern is complete and a section taken at any part is perfectly round, though it may vary in size. Twisted turning is carried out in the same way, except that the cutting edge is moved continuously along the entire length, being generally controlled by mechanical means to ensure com-



FIGURE 4.

TWIST TURNING.

plete accuracy. A twisted groove is thus cut, which, of course, is gradually deepened and rounded until it assumes the exact shape required. Double twists as Fig. 4 were carried out in the same way, being finished by hand on the inner sides, as a rule. Plain turning prevailed before about 1670, when the twisted



turning became fashionable. This vogue was introduced, it is said, from Portugal. It did not remain popular for very long, but ordinary turning in various baluster and columnar shapes was used without any very leading features to give an exact date until the end of the century.

*Legs and Stretchers.*—The shaping and attachment of the legs of chairs, tables, stools and stands, was a matter in which great progress was made during the walnut period. In about thirty years more advance was made than in the previous two hundred.

During this time there were many experiments in construction, and in good-class chairs we find the legs attached to the seat by different methods. In some the legs are attached under the seat, being simply pegged into the rail, the necessary strength being attained by the arrangement of the stretchers, in others the principle of the construction is practically that of the old "joined" chairs and stools, save that caning took the place of wooden filling to panels, until the final evolution of the problem, found in the combination of tenon joints of leg and rail and strengthening corner blocks which hold all rigid, was arrived at. This construction has stood the test of

time, and has survived until the present day, being still used.

Stretchers were in almost universal use until about 1700. The early stretchers tenoned in between the front legs were the general form down to about 1690. They were then modified as the general construction improved, and were set back from the front, being either recessed or shaped.

About 1690 there came into vogue a most distinctive type of turned leg which is one of the happiest styles that has ever been evolved. It is known as "French", "inverted cup" or "mushroom" turning. It consists of a wide "button mushroom" member over a tapering vase-like member, it is almost invariably used with stretchers through which it is dowelled to a ball, bun or onion foot. It had a vogue for perhaps ten years. A leg very similar in silhouette was hand worked in square or octagonal section. (See Fig. 31). Such legs were generally further ornamented with carving.

Stretchers used with similar supports for tables and stands were often cut of foundation wood and veneered on the top and visible edges, to accord with the rest of the finish.

This was apparently a more or less passing fashion, and was contemporary with a succession of different kinds of scrolled legs which were gradually getting nearer to the likeness of a cabriole leg. (Fig. 5).

The upper part of the scroll gradually lengthened out, and the lower part tightened up into



FIGURE 5.

LEG OF CHAIR. LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

a scrolled foot as time went on. The actual cabriole seems to have been achieved suddenly, possibly by actual copy of a foreign piece, as the final stages of its development are missing.

The early cabrioles are rather plain, and have smooth curves and a scroll or "French" foot ;



## PLATE II

## ARMCHAIR

This walnut chair, with its rich decoration of carving and turning, is said to have belonged to Nell Gwyn. The carved lions on the arms are somewhat an unusual feature. It is an exceptionally well finished piece, and may well have been a favourite seat of the King himself when visiting "Sweet Nell."

[V. AND A.]





later we have the club and pad foot with a very straight leg, and lastly the perfect cabriole was evolved (Fig. 6). The early type of unstretched cabriole is accompanied by feet of various kinds. In its more elaborate manifestations it has the claw and ball, or some of the "freak" feet like hoofs or paws, but these appear to be



FIGURE 6.

CABRIOLE LEG. EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

whims of either makers or clients who wanted to get away from the usual.

The earlier cabriole legs are rather slight, but towards the end of the walnut period a much more majestic type of leg was perfected. It is capable of forming a fitting support for the most elaborate and intricately scrolled back or the finest table top, yet when devoid of any added



ornament the same general lines blend happily with a simple back.

*Feet.*—The feet of chests of drawers and bureaux were generally turned to either a ball, a crushed ball or an onion shape; the “ball” is not a perfect sphere like a croquet ball, but has some little deviation which adds to the artistic effectiveness (Fig. 7). Sometimes there is a slight raised band or a groove at the broadest

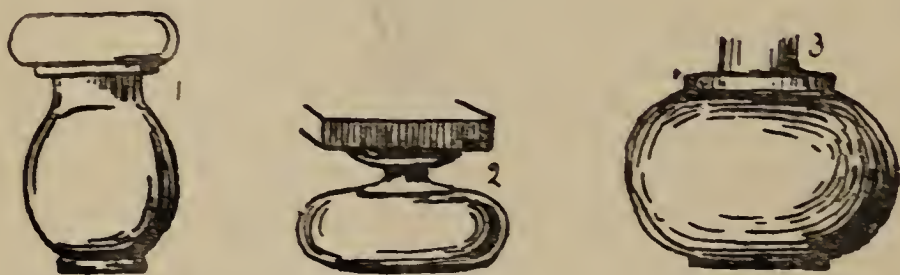


FIGURE 7.

TURNTD FEET.

1. ONION FOOT.      2. BUN FOOT.      3. CRUSHED BALL.

part. There is generally a “neck” to the turning, and a square of wood just where it joins the carcass.

Early in the eighteenth century the turned foot was superseded by the “bracket.” Turned work of every kind was abandoned in favour of shapes which depended on silhouette effects and subtle curves. Probably there were few lathes at work. The “Brackets” do not really sup-

port the chest or bureau, but are a screen for the four short square legs or blocks which actually do so. The bracket feet which are now in use are in many cases a replacement of original ball feet.



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## CHAPTER II

### FURNISHING WITH WALNUT

---

THE larger rooms of state during the age of walnut were splendid, but to the ordinary person of the present day they appear unhomelike and discouraging to the last degree. However, it must be remembered that they were not meant for living in, but were intended for special occasions only, and the more informal rooms, which were generally used, must have been distinctly of the type one calls "habitable". The curtained sash-windows and well-fitting doors with brass handles and locks, and the polished floors with rugs and carpets, all tended to what we call nowadays, comfort.

The collector will, therefore, be able to surround himself with his treasures, and use them in an environment wholly in keeping with their

design, whether they date from the reign of William and Mary or of Anne, without foregoing any of the convenient appointments looked for in a modern room. It is really extraordinary that with the sole exception of springs in the seats of upholstered chairs, there has been no great improvement made in the comfort and convenience of ordinary furniture during the last two hundred and thirty years.

The period that is chosen for a room is often to some extent the result of chance. An exceptionally beautiful table or cabinet has fallen to our lot, left to us, perhaps, as a family heirloom, or purchased at a country dealer's, and it is decided that it shall form the keynote of the whole room, and that the rest of the furniture, if not contemporary, must at least harmonise with it. Or perhaps the architecture of the house has decided the matter, and it is desired to carry out the furnishing scheme in conformity with it, and the project of a "period" room is embarked upon.

It is seldom possible for a collector, who has to content himself with "picking up" his treasures here and there, when and where he may, to assemble enough pieces of a given date to reproduce even sketchily a late seventeenth century or early eighteenth room entirely in

genuine antique specimens. It might be accomplished, but the search for suitable pieces of moderate prices would be a very long one.

Fortunately, however, both William and Mary and Queen Anne furniture harmonises so very well with judiciously chosen modern upholstered chairs and settees that the modest collector need not hesitate to embark on a period room if it so please him, filling up the gaps temporarily, not with reproductions, but with ordinary pieces of suitable character, replacing them, of course, when opportunity serves with genuine examples. He will be helped by the judicious use of loose covers of well chosen chintzes and other printed cottons.

The furnishing collector will soon discover that the easiest things to find are pieces suitable for a drawing-room or sitting-room—always provided that most of the seating accommodation is by means of modern pieces.

Bureaux, side tables, and chests on stands are obtainable in larger numbers than any other furniture of the time. China cabinets are comparatively uncommon, and for those who fear to leave treasures of china and glass to the tender mercies of the household deities, the safeguarding of their treasures is a difficult matter, if they also desire to display them. The cup-



boards which have doors with looking-glass are, of course, not uncommon, though they are among the more expensive pieces. Delicate china looks charming ensconced in the small compartments and pigeon holes of these cupboards, and their beauty strikes the eye afresh each time the doors are opened. Perhaps one enjoys them more thus than when they are visible to each casual glance. Where the original mirrors have been broken in such a cupboard, some people like to replace them with clear glass and thus turn them into display cabinets, but these doors never look really well thus, in my opinion.

Chests on stands were no doubt in many cases originally intended to support *étagères* for the display of Oriental china, and thus crowned they appear at their best.

Much of this furniture was probably made for the dressing-rooms and "cabinets" which were used as reception rooms on a small scale.

The large square mirrors with crests should, if possible, be hung over chests of drawers which are decorated like the frames. The inlay of many mirror-frames corresponds in detail with that of the tops and fronts of chests—though, of course, there is less of it—and together they form a delightful ensemble. I do not think these mirrors were originally intended for

## PLATE III

## CANE-BACKED CHAIRS

- (1) A carved and turned Charles II chair, with the graceful oval panel in the back which was introduced about the middle of the reign. It is a finely proportioned piece, though the ornament is somewhat roughly carried out.

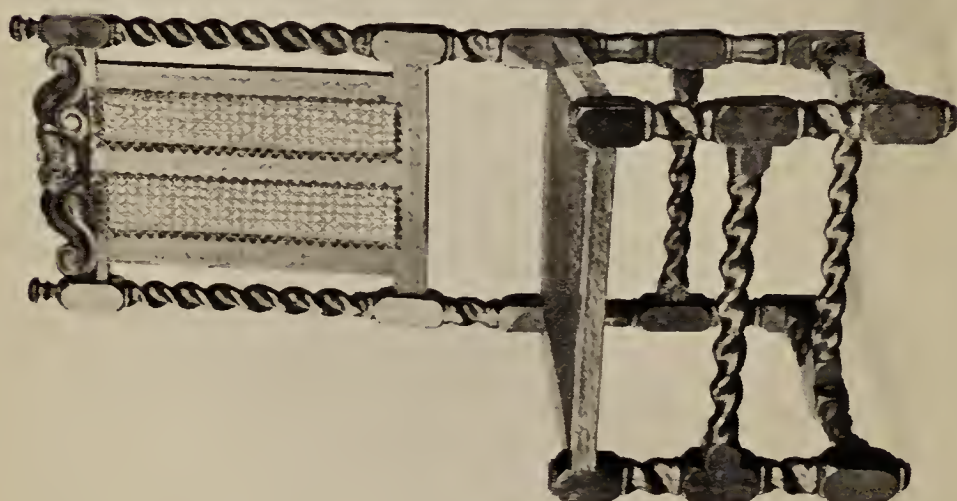
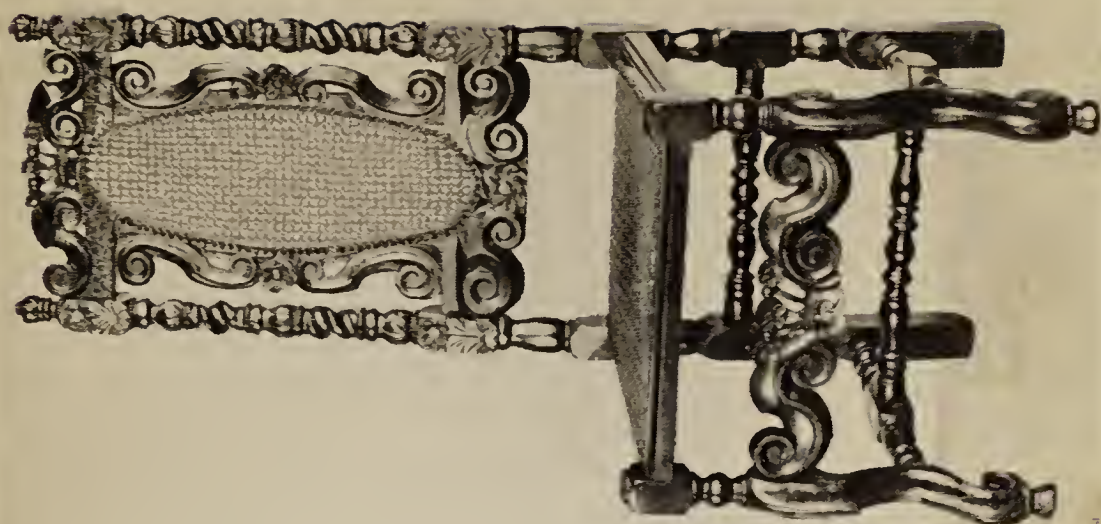
[V. AND A.]

- (2) This chair, dating from the end of the seventeenth century, is a survival of earlier constructional and ornamental methods.

*Height* 3' 6½". *Width* 20". *Depth* 16½".

[V. AND A.]







hanging over fireplaces, though, if a fireplace is not too large, one of them may be used in this way quite successfully. They also look very well over a table, and many were no doubt intended to be placed like this.

Careful people, by the way, will be well advised to place sheets of plate-glass over a marquetry or inlaid top placed thus beneath a mirror, as sooner or later someone will put a bowl of flowers on it, and equally inevitably some day the water will be spilt on the wood, a happening which may have disastrous results. The glass does detract somewhat from the effect of the woodwork, but in spite of this it is a wise precaution, as, however well marquetry is relaid, it is never quite the same as that in original condition. If a top has been spoilt and it is not wished to have it replaced, a very pleasant effect may be obtained by laying a piece of Chinese embroidery or old brocade cut to the exact size of the top under plate-glass. The embroidery should be edged with multi-coloured bands of silk, and the brocade with dull gold galloon or fringe.

Upholstered chairs of the "grandfather" type are often very comfortable in shape as to back and arms, but though fitted with down "squab" cushions are nevertheless somewhat hard in the

seat. It would, of course, be sheer vandalism to alter in any way a chair covered with original velvet or embroidery, but if the original covering has gone there is, I think, no harm done by having springs inserted in the frame under the squab; it does not alter the appearance and it is much more comfortable.

The stuffing on back and arms should not be interfered with if it can possibly be avoided. The old workers were very skilful in emphasising the contours by placing the filling exactly where it was required. If, however, removal and replacement is inevitable it should be done by a competent man who understands old work, or the entire chair will be ruined. But it must be repeated that it should only be done as a last resource. Hair stuffing can be cleaned, sterilized and revived while in position in the most wonderful way by means of steam and vacuum cleaning.

Old brass-headed nails should be preserved and used again where possible.

For writing there is nothing more convenient than the walnut bureau or "scrutoire." The pigeon-holes are as convenient now-a-days for reference books and stationery as they were two centuries and more ago. The well, though not perhaps much use as a safe for valuables, is



nevertheless convenient as a receptacle for private papers, as it is, of course, impossible to get anything out of it when once the sloping lid is locked, so anything in it is safe from prying eyes, though an easy prey to a burglar, cat or otherwise.

The large writing cabinets with drop fronts are glorious pieces and the making of any walnut room. In most cases I think they look best open, unless the front is very superbly decorated, as the interiors with their multitudes of tiny drawers and cupboards are so very attractive.

If the room has on one side two tall windows with a space between, it will be found that these pieces are at their best in such a position, unless the room is very dark, in which case the ornamentation would be lost in the shadows, and, indeed, in course of time the varnish would actually darken, being away from direct light.

A single chair of a specially beautiful type always looks well in use by a writing-table or bureau, and a single stool placed in front of the fireplace is well seen, and as such a stool is accounted a particular treasure, one likes to put it where its beauties will not be hidden from view.

Tables of different kinds must, of course, be placed according to their uses and dimensions,



and it is impossible to give any very useful hints about them. People are sometimes rather troubled what to do about very beautiful table-tops, they feel that they look bare without anything on them, but at the same time do not want to cover up the fine oystering or inlay. These are the horns of a dilemma on which the owners of these delightful pieces find themselves. As a rule I notice they begin by putting hardly anything on them and after a time they often forget their resolves and crowd them up with miscellaneous ornaments.

The majority of these tables were, I think, intended for use as dressing-tables, but in the days when they were made the toilet apparatus does not appear to have remained on the table when not in use, but was probably produced and removed as required, so that perhaps only a pair of candlesticks and a few ornamental jars of silver had a permanent resting-place on the table, and in most cases it will be found that such a middle course is the best. It seems that a few not too solid ornaments accentuate the beauties of the wood by the different lights and colours which they add to the reflections.

Each really good piece of walnut furniture is a work of art, and everything additional in the way of decoration should not only be interesting

or beautiful in itself, but so chosen as to accentuate the beauties of its surroundings.

The desirability, or indeed the possibility, of a walnut dining-room really resolves itself into the question of chairs. If you are so fortunate as to have a set of them, the main difficulty is solved. A real sideboard is extremely rare in walnut, but its place may be taken by the largest side-table available, and if possible a room should be chosen which has recesses which can be fitted up as "beaufaits" with shelves.

It appears to me that oak dining-tables must have persisted throughout the days of walnut. Even allowing for the perishable nature of walnut it is hard otherwise to account, not only for the absence of walnut examples but for the large number of well-made oak dining-tables.

If more storage room is required for extra plate, a lowboy might be used for this purpose, and its top would serve excellently for laying out dessert and so on.

A William and Mary or Queen Anne bedroom may be very charming, though most of us would not by choice sleep in a State bed of the days of William and Mary with its seventeen foot posts, hearselike plumes and heavy silken hangings. However, a four-post bed of chintz or moreen is charming, and in spite of general

opinion, is neither stuffy nor does it detract from the apparent size of the room. On the contrary, with one side of the bed curtains drawn to break any draught, windows can be opened widely in weather which otherwise would make such a proceeding very uncomfortable, if not dangerous.

As there is no woodwork visible, the building of such a bed is only a matter of carpentry and clever upholstery.

The walnut bedroom may in other ways conform to every modern idea of comfort. Choice may be made between a table and a chest of drawers for use as a toilet-table. I think that it is probable that tables were in general use in bygone days, a chest of drawers being placed in the room in some suitable position.

Walnut wardrobes were made, and inlaid pieces of extreme elaboration are known, but their price is not within the means of many of us, and hanging accommodation can be very suitably arranged in a corner fitment enclosed by two doors, opening in the middle, the paneling designed in accordance with the date of the furniture and painted white.

The few cheval glasses known of the period can almost be reckoned on the fingers, so though allowable in a reproduction room, the collector



would doubtless have to search long before a genuine specimen came to his net. The lovely wall mirrors of the date, however, are good as substitutes, though rarely large enough to show the whole figure full length—looking-glass in large pieces in those days was too expensive to permit of such long panels.

Though the long glasses are so scarce, there is a large choice of small toilet glasses which are at once charming and practical. The tiny drawers are useful for storing all manner of toilet necessities, and the glass is generally of beautiful quality.

A very useful addition to the equipment of a bedroom is one of the delightful trunks covered with red velvet or leather and ornamented with brass-headed nails.

The usual failing of all early rooms is that washstands were not in demand—washing being a process which had apparently small attractions, being carried out in a very half-hearted fashion without any special piece of furniture being consecrated to it.

Happy is the collector who has a powdering closet attached to his Queen Anne bedroom, as all washing impedimenta can be banished thither and segregated in its modernity from the relics of the past.

Failing the possibility of such a course, the washing apparatus may be enclosed in a fitment in a corner or recess balancing the hanging cupboard, the doors being kept closed when the wash-stand is not in use.



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## CHAPTER III

### CHAIRS

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**A**T the Restoration the provision of chairs as seats for the general company in sitting-rooms and bedrooms was an innovation, and their use even in dining-rooms was not general until some time later. But before the end of the seventeenth century the old-fashioned backless stools and still more primitive benches were superseded by chairs to a great measure.

For the master of the house and distinguished visitors chairs with arms were made—important looking but light (Fig. 8), and for the ordinary guests and the members of the family there were armless chairs of a similar type (Fig. 9).

The fashion was introduced into England from the Continent, and no doubt many walnut chairs

were imported, though such importations after all could have represented only a small proportion of the chairs which were required when nearly every householder of position wished to furnish his house with such conveniences. But as their general use was an exotic custom, it was only natural that both the native crafts-



FIGURE 8.

ARMCHAIR, CARVED WALNUT, CHARLES II (V. AND A.)

men and the foreigners who were working in England looked to the foreign examples as models and copied them in many respects. Rarely, however, did they follow them exactly in every particular: extraordinarily seldom indeed, considering how little the design of the

oak chairs of the early seventeenth century can have helped to solve the problem of constructing a light easily movable chair for general use. Within fifty years, however, they had learnt all their continental compeers could teach them in this matter, and were constructing chairs which for beauty of line, comfort, and general utility have never been surpassed. 184908

Walnut, of course, is an ideal wood for chair-making from the point of view of the workman, though too subject to worm for it to be very lasting. However, its advantages are many; it is light and easily worked, and when used as solid timber is equally suitable for decorating by carving or turning, while, as a veneer, burr walnut has a most beautiful grain, which contrasts splendidly with that of the plain walnut veneer with which it is so often combined.

The dating of walnut chairs is a difficult matter. One reason for this is that many of the general ideas were introduced from abroad, and it happened at times that a new pattern or detail was introduced tentatively and did not come into general use until some years had elapsed. Then, too, there were being made at the same time besides the household chairs (which were often "Dutch" chairs of ash or

## PLATE IV

## WALNUT CHAIRS

(1) Late Seventeenth Century. "James II" Type.

*Height* 4' 2½". *Width* 1' 6½". *Depth* 1' 4½".

(2) Late Seventeenth Century.

An early splat back, the splat stopping at an intermediate rail, not running down to the seat as is usual later. The pierced carving is charming, and rather unusual in this position.

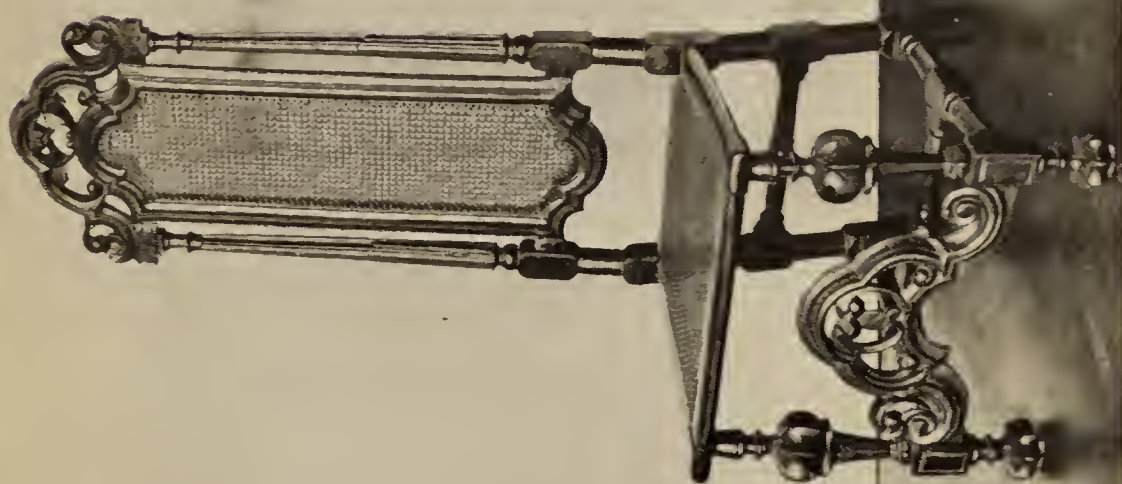
*Height* 3' 10". *Width* 1' 9¾". *Depth* 1' 11".

[V. AND A.]





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elm) the plain but finely made type of walnut chairs, which were suitable for the simpler rooms of large houses, and wherever show was not so much desired as conveniency and comfort, and the more elaborate chairs which by their ornate carving, gorgeous upholstery and fine surface decoration added splendour to rooms of state, where they were in their right place, and also made their appeal for general use to those of the recently enriched, who eagerly embraced every opportunity for display.

The number of different patterns of chairs made in the last half of the seventeenth century is extraordinarily large. Still it is possible to adopt certain main classifications, and the more examples one examines the more one perceives that the general progress of the stream was going on, though in parts there were hurrying eddies and elsewhere quiet backwaters.

There is rather a tendency nowadays, I think, towards giving exact dates when such and such a detail or method came into use. It is, however, only in very rare cases that it is safe to make any definite statements as to dates in the history of English furniture: where in this book I do give such dates I hope they may be taken quite generally, not as implying a historically

verified date like that of the Fire of London or the Battle of Waterloo.

Two main divisions of walnut chairs are at once apparent to anyone examining a series either of the actual pieces or photographs: those with stretchers and those without.

The presence or absence of the stretcher implies not only a difference in appearance but a difference in construction. Stretchered chairs continued to be made and still are made to the present day, but about 1700 the master chair makers learnt that a perfectly constructed chair was independent of their aid.

Walnut chairs with stretchers may be further divided into three classes.

I. Those with stretchers between all the legs—including the two front and the two back legs and an under stretcher connecting the two side stretchers—like the chairs shown in Plates I, II, III.

II. Those which have transverse stretchers approximately in the shape of an X. An example is given in Figure 14 on page 47.

III. Those that have the H shaped stretchers and back stretchers only and as a rule cabriole-like legs. A typical example is that reproduced in half-tone in Plate VII, 2.

There are other varieties, but the introduction of each of these types seems to mark the introduction of a new phase. It, of course, often happens that what may be termed "hybrids" are found, in which the kind of back which normally was made to go with one type of leg and stretcher is allied to another. Such intermediate types of chairs are interesting, but are rarely of the highest artistic value. They lack the great beauty of unity of style.

Chairs belonging to the first class vary from extreme simplicity to a considerable degree of elaboration and are often very beautiful.

A very simple early type is shown in Plate I. The earliest of them such as this must have appeared as startling innovations to the eyes of Englishmen accustomed only to the solid oak which preceded them. They are light in appearance and easy to move about. The caning, which took the place of the framed panels and seat of oak (often half-an-inch thick), accounted for much of the diminution in weight, as well as the fact that walnut is a much lighter wood.

The backs of the chairs made during the reign of Charles II consist of caned panels placed between two turned uprights, the whole connected at the top by a cresting rail tenoned



between the uprights. The legs are in one piece with the supports to the arms, and the back legs in one with the uprights of the back. The stretchers are tenoned into the legs.

The general proportions are graceful, though

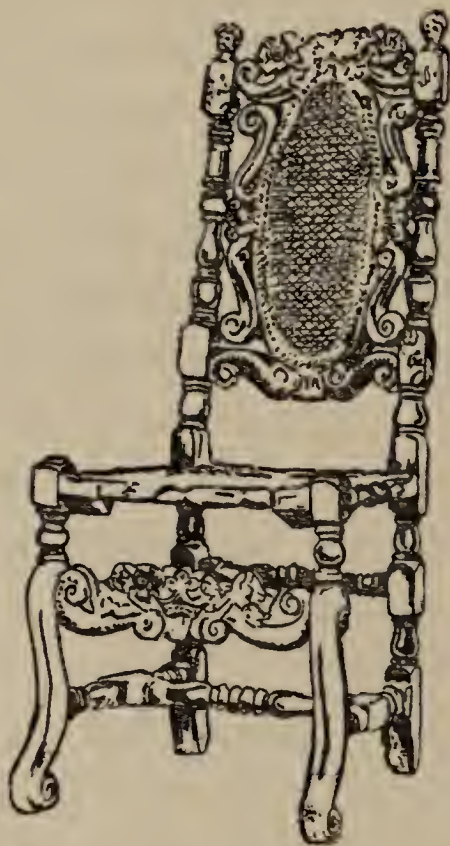


FIGURE 9.

WALNUT AND BEECH CHAIR (V. AND A.).

the early chairs are generally squarer in shape and lower and simpler in appearance than those made later. They almost always have arms.

Figure 8, page 34, shows a typical early caned

back chair. The carving on a solid ground lacks the lightness of the later pierced work, but it also has a simple dignity of its own.

The chairs of Class I became gradually more elaborate while maintaining the essentials of the original construction. Panels in the back were sometimes oval as in Fig. 9 instead of the more usual oblong, and more and more carving was introduced.

A fine example of a "small" chair with oval panelled back is shown Plate III, I.

As time went on carving was used to ornament not only the cresting rail and front stretcher—which are, however, generally the most elaborately decorated parts—but the frame of the back panel and all the woodwork which is not turned.

In these chairs the silhouette is the principal consideration, and the carving is pierced so that in the finer and more elaborate chairs it is almost or quite in the round.

A feature of the designs of the back and of the front stretchers is in many cases a crown, supported by amorini amongst scrollwork. Many such chairs were made somewhat early after the Restoration, when loyalty was at a very high pitch, but the pattern survived as a

tradition for some time and crowns and cupids do not actually "date" a chair.

Probably contemporary with the later carved stretchers are the turned so-called "Portuguese

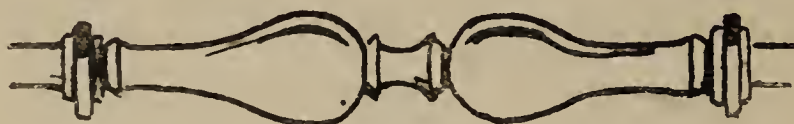


FIGURE 10.

"PORTUGUESE" STRETCHER. LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

Stretchers" (Fig. 10) with bulbous excrescences in the middle of the front stretchers. Many



FIGURE 11.

"SPANISH" FOOT.

chairs with such stretchers have the "Spanish Foot," which is curiously constant in its shape

considering that it does not resemble any natural or architectural object (Fig. 11).

The later of these chairs have the front legs elaborated into scrolls, the feet being formed by the rolled-up end of the scroll. Probably most of the chairs with these legs date from after 1680. A typical example of such

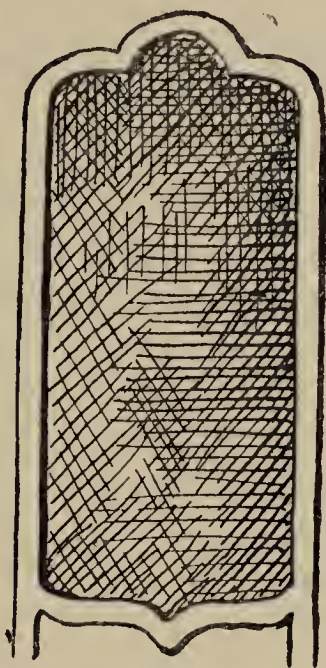


FIGURE 12.

“SPANISH” BACK.

scrolled legs is reproduced in half-tone in Plate III, 1.

Upholstered backs to these chairs occur occasionally, but not often, though many which had originally caned back have been renovated by means of a cushioned back.



## PLATE V

## WALNUT CHAIRS

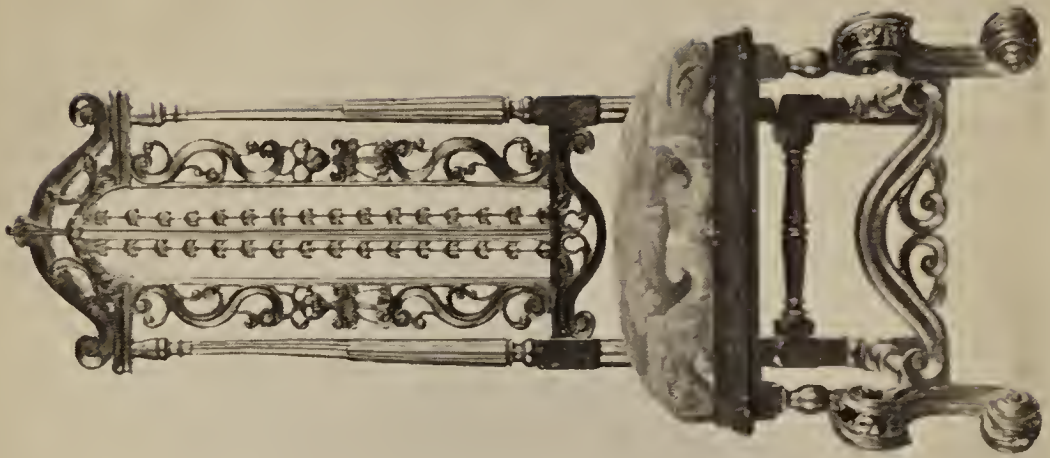
- (1) This fine chair has a back rather in the Marot style, but has stretchers of somewhat the traditional shape instead of the serpentine stretchers which would have been more in keeping with this leg. Many of the fashionable chairs of the William III period were in this style, and while they bear a general resemblance to each other they vary in detail.

*Height 4' 3". Width 17". Depth 18".*

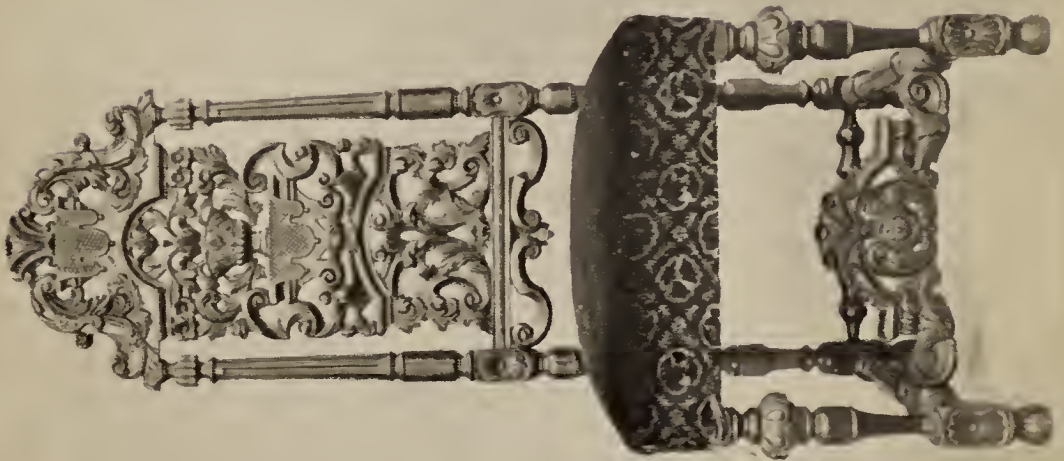
[V. AND A.]

- (2) A late Seventeenth Century chair of carved wood. The seat covered with silk and wool needlework.

[V. AND A.]



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The general effect of the most characteristic chairs belonging to this class is light but not fragile: the simple ones are plain without looking bare and the richest examples are splendid without ostentation. They are almost all charming.

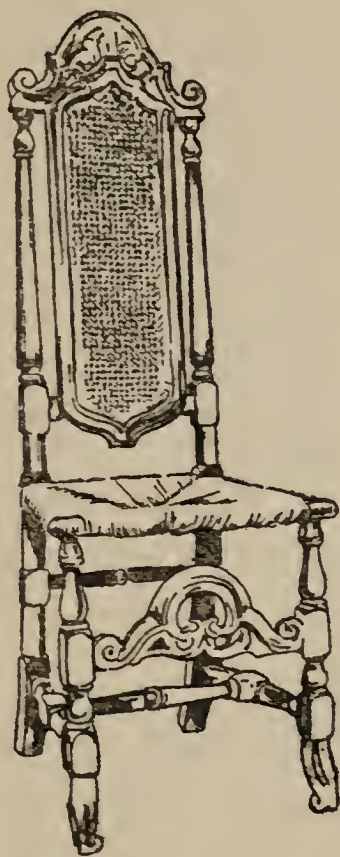


FIGURE 13.

WALNUT CHAIR, *c.* 1700. B.G.M.

Chairs continued to be made on the same general constructional lines, though differing in ornamental details, until almost the end of the century, overlapping Class II, the twisted turning, however, being superseded by baluster



turning, and the backs being made of wood either carved or in slats. Sometimes the "Spanish" back (Fig. 12), in which the whole back formed a single panel was introduced, in fact there was a general search for novel effects, often with happy results.

In many of the "small" chairs the front legs are fixed under the seat instead of having the front rail tenoned into them—as shown in Fig. 13, which is a somewhat unusual walnut chair with a caned panel in the back and a rush seat. It dates from quite the end of the seventeenth century or the beginning of the eighteenth century. Its height is 4' 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", it is 18" wide and 19 $\frac{1}{4}$ " deep. When they have a very high narrow back such chairs are often called James II chairs.

Class II. The second class of walnut chairs appears first about 1685. They have the X-shaped stretcher as in Fig. 14 which connects the legs running from the right front leg to the left back leg and vice versa. This stretcher is also called the "William and Mary Stretcher," the "Double C Stretcher" and the "Smooth Serpentine Stretcher."

These chairs generally have symmetrical legs, sometimes round in section, in which case they are turned, or worked by hand in an angular

section or carved. In any case the profile is much the same. About a third down between the seat and the floor there is often a prominent member variously described as "mushroom shaped," "inverted cup shaped," or "cap-



FIGURE 14.

PEARWOOD CHAIR. WILLIAM AND MARY.  
THE PROPERTY OF C. E. LOWE, ESQ.

shaped" which is sometimes carved, below this the leg tapers in a kind of vase shape towards the stretcher. Each arm of the stretcher ends in a square, and the leg passes through this,

the foot, generally a bun or flattened ball, being dowelled on to it. The stretcher with a slightly different leg is shown in Fig. 14, which is a magnificent pearwood chair with turned legs and uprights, smooth serpentine stretchers and pierced and carved back. It still has its original green velvet cover. The leg, but not the X stretcher, is shown in a chair, which is somewhat of a hybrid in many details, in Plate v. Such chairs were obviously made under the same influence that inspired the X stretcher chairs and are closely akin to them.

Chairs of this kind are often very rich, and have finely carved or upholstered backs. They were as a rule made for the more splendid houses, and though simple examples do exist, they are not usual. The backs mostly follow the arrangement of a central panel between two uprights and these uprights are almost always turned, though sometimes they are carved or reeded. The centre part of the back is often extremely elaborate in design, and most beautifully pierced and carved. These chairs show strong traces of Continental influence, many being almost exactly like contemporary French chairs.

There are some chairs which have this stretcher in combination with heavy scrolled



legs, but they appear clumsy and rather unsatisfactory. The best chairs of this kind are naturally scarce, but they are very beautiful. They have that complete, finished air, which belongs only to elaborate examples of any craft, when made by a workman who is thoroughly at home, not only with the tools and materials used, but with the special class of design he is translating into actuality. They are a class by themselves. They do not seem to be evolved from their predecessors and they have no part in the ancestry of the cabriole. Probably they represent only a small proportion of the chairs made at their period, and the general evolution of the scroll legs was proceeding at the same time in its passage towards the cabriole.

The cabriole was preceded by the scrolled legs of the later carved stretcher chairs, in which the scrolled lower part gradually became more and more important; but there are some missing links in the chain.

The gradual change of the back from the central panel of cane to the "spoon" central splat was also taking place. First the one cane panel was divided into two by a central upright which grew in importance until finally the caning was omitted. The final abandonment of cane coincided more or less completely



with the arrival of the stretchered cabriole leg which I have called Class III.

Class III. The typical form of the small chair of this class is shown in Fig. 15 and the typical armchair in Fig. 16. This lacks its stretcher, which must have been like that of the "small" chair in Plate VII, 1.



FIGURE 15.

WALNUT CHAIR (V. AND A.), *c.* 1700.

There are many precursors of the true cabriole among the stretchered cabrioles. It seems as if designers and constructors had a half idea of what they wanted, and experimented with a great variety of shapes before they quite attained to their ideal. They may, perhaps, as some writers suggest, have been striving to

translate into reality some of the seats sculptured on the works of Classic art which were being brought into the country. Many ancient representations of legs of the cabriole kind, though perhaps more closely resembling real animals' limbs, are found on gems and reliefs. More probably they were trying to copy foreign

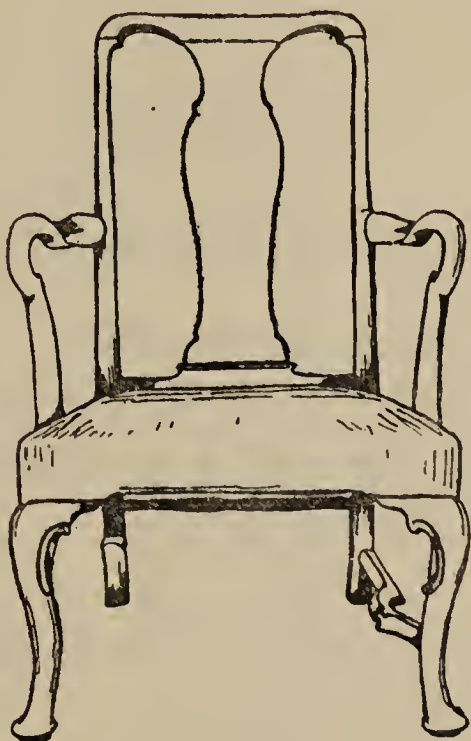


FIGURE 16.

WALNUT ARMCHAIR. EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (V. AND A.).

models without abandoning their traditional methods.

The term "cabriole" is not a contemporary one. It is said to be derived from "capriole" meaning a "spring" such as a goat makes, and

## PLATE VI

## CANE-BACKED CHAIR

A "Black" "James II" type chair. Note the high back and the scroll legs set under the seat framing instead of having the seat rails tenoned into them.

[V. AND A.]







it is perhaps most properly applied only to those supports which (often without actually representing nature in accurate detail), still give the impression of an animal's leg—tight-strung and tense. The "foot" is of various kinds, being sometimes an accurate representation of a hoof or paw such as that on the uncommon chair shown in Plate IV, which is fairly closely modelled on an animal's hoof, sometimes the well-known claw and ball, and sometimes a pad or club, which merely vaguely recalls a foot or hoof in its general outline and modelling.

There are other legs of the pseudo-cabriole type which resemble the cabriole in their main lines, but while at once graceful and strong and quite as beautiful in some of their forms as the real cabriole, they really have very little resemblance to the leg of a living creature. The "foot" of these is generally a scroll or a kind of club or a diamond club. Some people call these a "French leg," others include them as cabrioles. Both the real cabriole and the French leg are represented in the "H" stretcher Class, and to my thinking they are rather unsatisfactory at this stage of their evolution. The stretchers of still earlier types of chairs were obviously necessary to the construction, and an essential part of

the design, and add to the beauty of the whole. Cabrioles, however, with their suggestion of the legs of living animals, lose by the addition of stretchers which, breaking the sweep of the line, have the air of an after-thought. They are found, however, with all early cabriole legs until the beginning of the reign of Queen Anne.

Their abandonment marks a great step forward in construction, and the gain in appearance and lightness is considerable. Chairs without them must have been much more convenient and comfortable for ladies in days of hoop petticoats, when feet could with propriety only like "mice peep in and out" and not display themselves to an admiring public.

In a class by themselves are included the walnut chairs after stretchers were abandoned. They almost all have cabriole or otherwise curved legs. An almost perfect example is the beautiful chair from the Victoria and Albert Museum, shown in Fig. 17. These chairs are often very beautiful, every line and curve blending together to form a well-considered whole. There are no straight lines anywhere in the more elaborate examples. The seats have an elaborately curved outline and the backs have curved splats and outer rails. The straight

uprights with a definite top rail between them were abandoned, and top and sides combine into one smooth sweeping line. There is also a noticeable alteration in the profile. Heretofore, though the backs were often raked backwards to give a slope, and also padded to fit



FIGURE 17.

WALNUT QUEEN ANNE CHAIR (V. AND A.).

the curve of the sitter's back to some extent, the actual woodwork showed no general curve in profile. With the fine Queen Anne chairs the shaping of the wooden backs is most carefully thought out, so that they are often more comfortable than a stuffed chair.



Many of the early cabriole chairs have seats of the "stuffer" type, finished with ornamental fringe. As time went on they were rather differently constructed, a broad band of walnut showing all round over the knees of the legs, and a rebate is arranged in the frame to take a drop-in seat. The lines of the legs differ in accordance with this change. In the earlier chairs there is a short interval of one or two inches of straight leg between the seat rail and the spring of the cabriole, covered, of course, as originally upholstered, by one of the elaborate fringes in use on so much of the furniture of the time, which, without this space, would have disguised the line of the leg.

The knee of the walnut cabriole leg is in many cases carved, often very finely and elaborately. Such pieces are sources of great pride to their owners, though those of us to whom the more luxurious type of finely carved walnut is "sour grapes" console ourselves with the reflection that lions' heads, human faces and satyr masks carved on the knee of a leg savour too much of the grotesque to be quite in keeping with the best taste in domestic furniture. In my opinion the shell or acanthus in low relief has a far happier effect, though of course, such chairs do not

generally fetch the same high prices as those with more elaborate carvings.

The shell was a much used detail in the reigns of William and Mary, and Anne. We find it not only on the knees of chairs and other seats but also on the turnover at the top of the splats; it is always of the cockle or scallop species, not the whorled or snail variety.

Another ornamental detail which is carved on the ends of the arms and on the knees of Queen Anne chairs is the eagle head, often very beautifully modelled, though simplified as to minor points, a "naturalistic" treatment of the feathers and so on not often being attempted.

It is very interesting to see how the carvers of the more artistically interesting pieces of walnut furniture succeed in indicating the character of feathers, fur or scales without exactly copying the model. Some of the claw and ball feet are masterpieces of this kind. The claw has such a secure grip of the ball and the whole leg seems to take such a firm stance—to borrow a golfing term. Yet there is no slavish copying of anatomical or other details in the most beautiful examples, though in some of the more elaborate chairs there is a lack of restraint in this matter.

The splats of the backs and also the side rails are often veneered with beautifully grained burr walnut, and in some cases there is a small panel of marquetry let into the central splat, and in others the whole splat is covered with seaweed marquetry.

*Black Chairs.*—Walnut chairs of every kind except the very early patterns may be found painted black. It does seem singular that a beautiful wood such as walnut should be covered up in this way, but though many black painted chairs are of common wood, such as beech, many of the best black chairs are of walnut.

It almost appears as if (in many cases, at all events) the grain of the solid wood was not admired, and it is quite exceptional for solid walnut to be left in plane surfaces unveneered, unless painted. Walnut was simply chosen for these black painted chairs on account of its ease in working and its suitability for decoration of every kind such as twist turning and carving. I have an armchair carved with shells and eagles' heads in plain walnut, which was evidently originally painted black. A former owner has stripped the general surface but the crevices retain remains of paint, also, alas! the scratches made by the scraper roughly used to remove it. (Plate VII, 2).



It is probable that most of these black chairs are a reflection of the liking for ebony furniture. Ebony veneer was used for clock-cases and cabinet-chests, being highly valued for its colour and dense, close grain, and probably the black chairs were made to harmonise with such pieces. Solid ebony chairs would have been

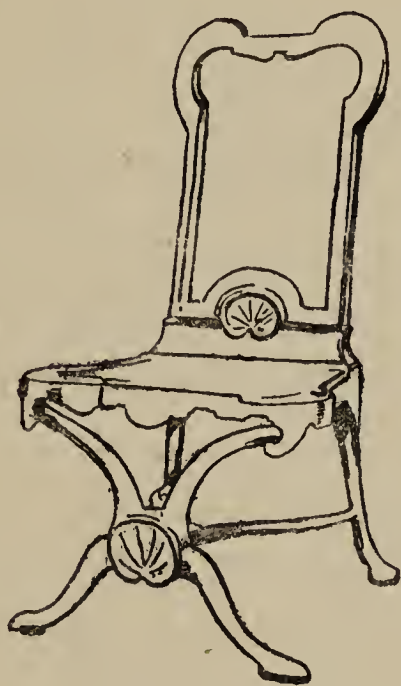


FIGURE 18.

BLACK CHAIR, *c.* 1710 (V. AND A.).

very expensive, very heavy and very brittle, while veneer could not well be used where carving was an essential part of the design or for chair legs.

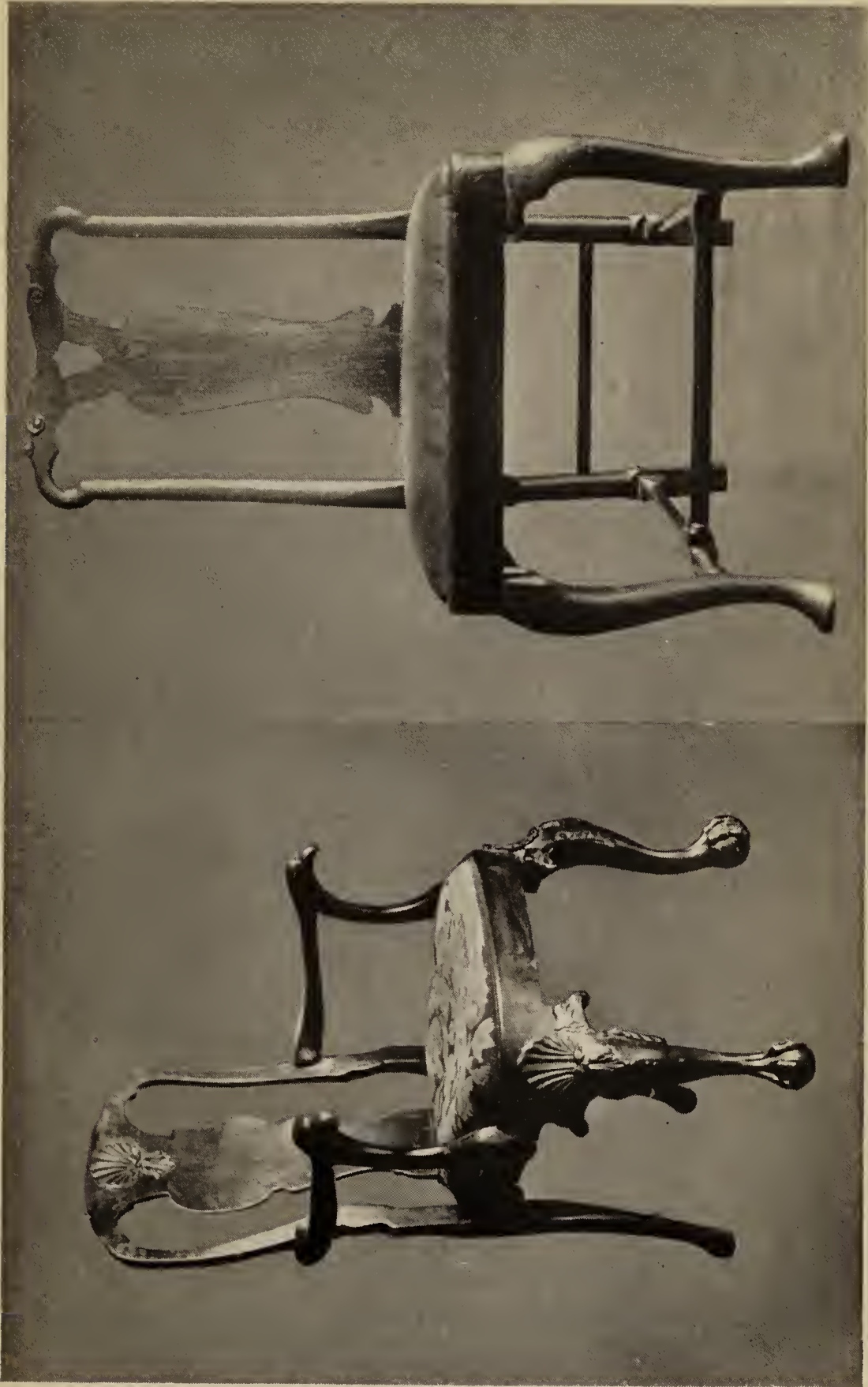
An uncommon example of an ebonised chair with a solid back is shown in Fig. 18, the



## PLATE VII

## "CABRIOLE" CHAIRS

- (1) Walnut chair, early eighteenth century. This chair was formerly painted black, and though fine in proportions and contour, lacks richness of surface.
- (2) Walnut chair dating from the end of the seventeenth century or the beginning of the eighteenth. The seat of this chair appears out of proportion, owing to its nearness to the camera.





frame being filled with wood where a cane panel might have been expected.

Walnut chairs of any kind are scarce, and, as a rule, correspondingly expensive, but sometimes these black painted chairs are to be "picked up" in their less well-known developments. I know of a charming two-panelled caned-back chair with a carved shell on the back, and turned legs, which, disguised by a Turkey twill cushion padding its back, and a flounce of the same hiding its legs, ran the gauntlet of a very expert auctioneer and about twenty dealers, and was knocked down to an amateur as "A high-backed nursery chair" for twelve-and-six. It was unusual and it was painted black, but nevertheless the fact remains that a William and Mary chair with original caning was bought in open market for less than an ordinary bedroom chair.

It is, I think, a mistake to strip such chairs of their paint (though I allow it does seem tempting), but the colour of the wood will not be good, and it is much better to leave it as it was intended by the maker. Those black chairs, and indeed black furniture generally, were very fashionable at the end of the seventeenth century. This very chair may have been made by Mr. Gerriet Johnson, cabinet maker



to the King, who supplied such things to the aristocracy.

Another curious type of chair is depicted in Fig. 19. The collector who hopes to "pick up" his treasures must study these more uncommon examples so as to be able to recognize under unusual guise really interesting pieces. This



FIGURE 19.

WALNUT CHAIR (V. AND A.), *c.* 1700.

walnut chair has a caned back and seat which are covered over with leather. It came from Boughton House, Northamptonshire, and was given to the Victoria and Albert Museum by the Duke of Buckinghamshire, 1918. Chairs of this kind are very scarce, but it is not unique.

The furnishing collector will find himself faced with a distinct difficulty in finding chairs in usable condition, so many have perished. Chairs are always subject to vicissitudes which do not affect furniture such as chests of drawers and bureaux. They have so many joints which are subject to strain. Every time a particularly heavy person sits down on a chair it gives a tiny bit somewhere, and if he is wicked enough to tip it up on its back legs, the strain is enormous. Even pushing a chair from the table after a meal places unequal pressure on the different parts. A great many chairs, especially the earlier single ones, were in some sense experimental, and naturally in all cases the experiments were not perfectly successful in meeting the constructional problems involved.

These particular difficulties had not to be faced by the makers of furniture which had not to be moved about; then, too, the great enemy "worm" was more fatal to chairs than to anything else, because once they had rendered legs or back shaky, the chair became a danger. A similar amount of deterioration hardly diminished the usefulness of other things.

Walnut chairs are costly because so many of them have gone irrevocably and it is only on very rare occasions that they are



obtainable at a moderate price. However, they are delightful possessions, and as a work of art a good old chair is much more satisfactory than a second-rate old picture, and it is generally well worth the price which has to be given for it. Single chairs, of course, are not priced at anything like the rate charged for similar chairs in sets of half-a-dozen or eight, and a dozen set may be worth about thirty times as much as a single one by itself.

Upholstered chairs were almost an invention of the second half of the seventeenth century. There were a few earlier, but they were exceptional pieces. The reign of Charles II may have produced a few, simply cushioned and padded, but it is after 1685 that the great development of this branch of upholstery took place, and the more elaborate William and Mary armchairs show a degree of skill which is really remarkable; they are, in fact, more ornate and more ingeniously constructed, from the upholsterer's point of view, than those of any other period.

As a general rule the date of stuffed chairs can be judged by their legs, which are found in all the styles which were used for chairs with caned or carved wooden backs, only rather squatter in their proportions. The backs of the armchairs of the end of the seventeenth century

are more elaborate than those of the reign of Queen Anne and onward. The chairs with carved scrolled stretchers are those which, as a rule, have the most elaborately curved and padded arms and backs. The upholstery is so skilfully done that it almost appears to be carved out of some solid material until we touch it and find that in truth the intricate and clear-cut scrolls are built up on a minimum of framework by the skilful use of horsehair and stout linen canvas.

Such chairs were originally covered with rich velvets or exquisite needlework, principally elaborate designs in *gros* and *petit point*. The rare examples which have survived in good colour and condition are brilliant and gorgeous pieces, and are, of course, of very large pecuniary value nowadays.

These chairs are individual works of art, and it is really extraordinary that in many cases they are in good condition as to stuffing and upholstery after two and a half centuries or thereabouts.

If the upholstery has perished, the selling price of such chairs declines rapidly, and is very much less than those with wooden or carved backs; thus sometimes affording a chance to obtain a genuine period chair at less than a



modern one would cost, even after the work of renovation has been carried out.

“Small” chairs with upholstered backs and seats are made on the general lines of their unstuffed contemporaries. Most of them belong to the cabriole type, though there are a considerable number of survivors from the days of William and Mary. The working of designs in *petit point* or *gros point* for the covers of such chairs was a favourite occupation of the ladies of the nobility who followed the fashion set by the Queen, who loved to sit for hour after hour at her embroidery frame.

Here again is a possibility for the observant and knowledgeable searcher. These single chairs, unless covered with fine needlework or silk, do not catch the eye of the average small dealer or country auctioneer as being anything out of the ordinary, and they are, therefore, priced at a modest rate. I myself bought a very nice walnut-legged chair with high back for three guineas at a dealer's at a Welsh watering place and an acquaintance bought a pair of very similar chairs (which were, however, square topped—not trilobed like mine) at a sale at a country vicarage for five pounds. The vicar was fearfully pleased about it, as he had bought them a few years before for twenty-five shillings.

My friend, who is an indefatigable needle-woman, has set to work to cover them with stitchery, using as a model the well-known "white" chairs in the Victoria and Albert Museum illustrated on Plate ix. In the meantime they are clothed with loose covers of chintz, as very likely they were two hundred and twenty years ago, while their first owner plied her needle embroidering their first covers.

In describing chairs of this period, the following terms are often used and may perhaps puzzle those who have not met with them before. The "Spanish foot" is a curious hoof-like foot which is, however, really a kind of scroll and is sometimes curiously out of harmony with the rest of the piece. The grooves often appear to be simply scooped or gouged out of the wood in the more roughly made examples, and there is an element of grotesquerie about them, even when well executed, which accords rather badly with the otherwise stately appearance of the chairs of which they form part.

The "Spanish back" is a back consisting of one panel occupying the whole of the space generally divided between a central panel and side rails. The top rail is often trilobed. The "Portuguese stretcher" is turned, with one or

two bulbous members in the middle. The two bulbs are perhaps the more characteristic.

The "Splat back" has a long panel of wood between two side rails which runs from top to bottom of the back connecting the back seat rail with the smoothly curving top into which the cresting rail had developed. The outline of the splat is often elaborately curved. There is often carving in low relief at its edge and some have small panels of marquetry in the centre.

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## CHAPTER IV

### DAY-BEDS AND SETTEES

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THE day-bed is an ancestor of our Chesterfields and sofas, being a long lounge or couch on which it was possible to recline at full length.

Shakespeare mentions one in *As You Like It*, but I do not think an Elizabethan example exists, though quite a number of oak day-beds survive.

The most usual type of seventeenth century day-bed takes the form of a long narrow couch resembling a bench with a caned seat, having a support for the back at one end. This is often arranged as a movable panel, hinged to the frame and adjustable to any angle to suit the convenience of the user, being held in position by chains. The head panel generally takes the



form of a somewhat squat version of the contemporary chair backs. In fact the whole ornamentation and construction is similar to that on the chairs and stools of the time at which they were made. No doubt they were invented to be used *en suite* with chairs or stools to match, as shown in Marot's illustration of Queen Mary's apartments at Hampton Court.

They cannot have been very comfortable to

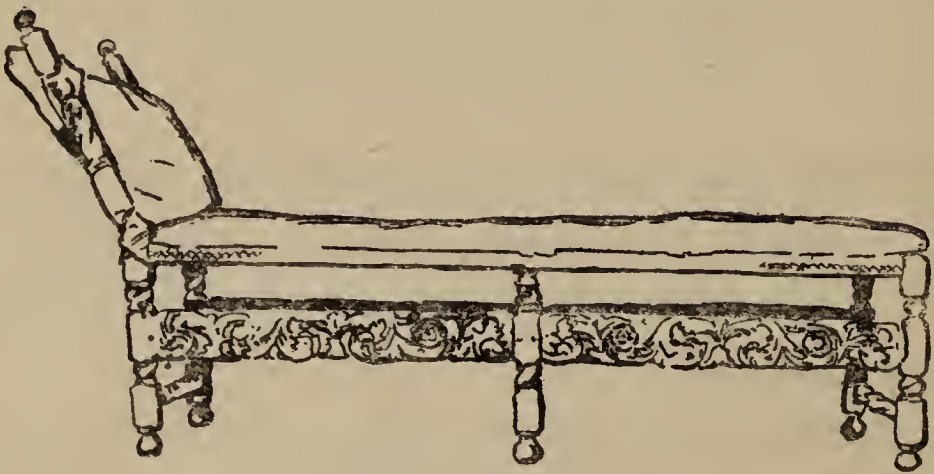


FIGURE 20.

DAY-BED. SECOND HALF OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

lie upon in the manner of a bed, but for sitting with the back supported by the movable head-piece and the feet stretched out in front they are quite a good shape, but one has an uneasy feeling that the back is not sufficiently strongly constructed to be absolutely safe.

Some of those dating from early in the reign of Charles II are, like the chairs, rather roughly

made, and the carved ornament, though spirited, lacks finish. That illustrated in Fig. 20, made of oak and walnut, is a very fine specimen in good condition. The solid splats and simple construction are typical of its period. Probably in its original state it had loose squab cushions of red velvet.

The other illustration, Plate XIII, shows another day-bed of somewhat the same type but rather later date; the carved splat is pierced and the legs are scrolled instead of being turned as in the earlier type. The embroidery which now fills the panel is of recent date, and as originally constructed the panel was no doubt filled with cane open-work.

All day-beds are rare. Probably they were not made in large numbers, and they are not constructed in a fashion which would enable them to undergo the ordinary vicissitudes of passing from hand to hand, in the way other pieces of furniture which are more compact in shape can do without damage. Then, too, when they passed out of fashion they were rather cumbersome things to have about if they served no purpose, and many no doubt have been broken up. A short time ago I saw what appeared to be a nice-looking long stool, this on closer inspection turned out to be a day-bed

## PLATE VIII

## WALNUT CHAIRS

- (1) An interesting form showing how the centre splat was evolved out of the cane-panelled backs. The centre divisions gradually gained importance, while the caning gradually diminished, until finally it was omitted altogether.

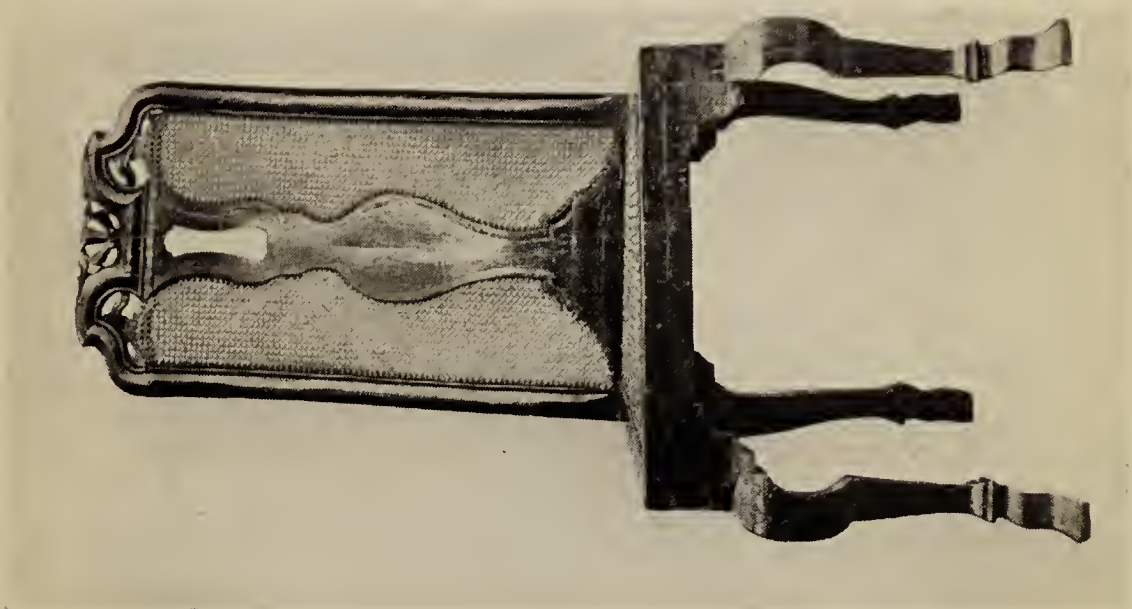
[V. AND A.]

- (2) This Queen Anne chair is designed on simpler and straighter lines than most of its contemporaries. There is a suggestion of architectural inspiration in its pilaster-like central splat which is in harmony with the firm drawing of the back legs. It is veneered with burr walnut. The property of Messrs. Phillips, Ltd., Hitchin.





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without its back. Doubtless at some time it had been broken and the remains of the head had been cleared off, leaving a most presentable, if somewhat wide, seat when covered by a squab cushion.

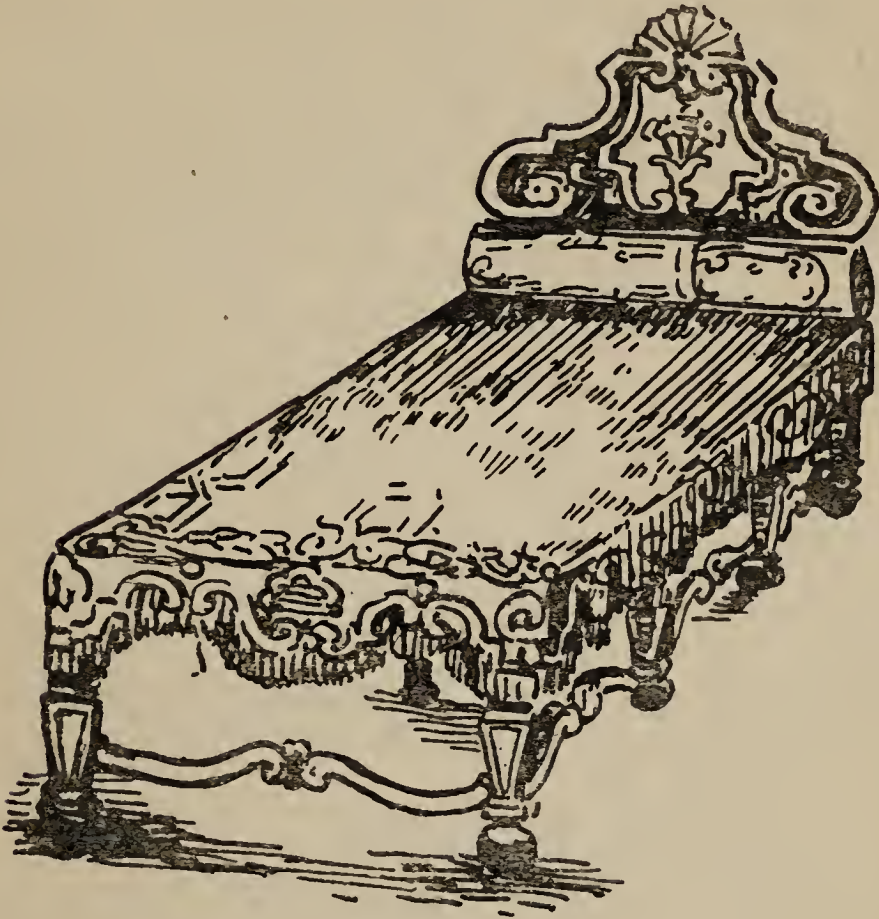


FIGURE 21.

DAY-BED. LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. MAROT.

There is a day-bed illustrated by Marot (Fig. 21) which is a pronounced example of the general type of furniture which he shows as prevailing at Hampton Court. Whether this furniture was made from original designs by

himself, or whether he merely records what he found there one cannot say with any degree of certainty, but they no doubt show the style of furniture which was customary at that time in richly equipped houses.

The head-piece of this day-bed is carved in scrolls rising higher in the centre, giving an air of importance to the general effect, the legs are tapering, apparently square in section and connected by shaped stretchers. The top is fitted with a fringe-trimmed cushion on the covering of which the scrolls are repeated, either in embroidery or (more probably) in applied galloon, in the fashion which is shown on the bed furniture of the fine bed (Fig. 26) on page 101 at the Victoria and Albert Museum. So little of this type of decoration survives, though it was very usual at the time it was made, that this bed is peculiarly interesting.

Day-beds of the William and Mary period are very rare. They probably were less fashionable than earlier, though as a day-bed is illustrated at Hampton Court it can hardly be correct to say (as is suggested by one writer) that they may have been regarded by Royalty as evidences of the lax morality which prevailed under the earlier Stuarts, and so were frowned on by those of high degree; still there certainly

prevailed a greater formality in the manners of the time, which led to the coming of the settee on which anything of the nature of a reclining position was impossible.

Almost all the late seventeenth century settees are of the upholstered type, though there are a few which are based on the general style of single chairs, the back being built up out of panels resembling the backs of chairs. Such seats were probably neither comfortable nor convenient in use, and the few made were not enough to constitute a style.

Those with stuffed backs must have been much more comfortable and better suited to the taste of the fine ladies of the time in every way.

Early examples in many cases closely resemble two large upholstered armchairs placed side by side. There are, of course, arms only at the outer sides, and though the lines exactly follow those of a chair there is more breadth in each panel of the back than in the single one of the chair. The arms scroll outwards and roll over in a somewhat elaborate fashion as a rule. Such settees are very rare now, and no doubt even at the time they were made comparatively few people except the nobility possessed them. They generally have two squab cushions on the



seat and from the woodwork can be dated early in the reign of William and Mary.

Rather later constructors of settees, abandoning the idea of an actual double seat, though still working on the general lines of an upholstered "grandfather" chair, built them on rather more extended lines, the backs being a little lower and having a more pronounced rake. The seats are generally of the "stuff-over" type, which suits the needlework with which they are often covered better than the squab fashion, though that was often used. Such chairs often have woodwork of the stretched cabriole kind, and date from the end of the seventeenth century and onwards into the early years of the eighteenth.

The next great change seems to have been made in Queen Anne's reign, and to have more or less coincided with the coming of the stretcherless cabriole. The scrolled and elaborately upholstered arms gave place to those of open woodwork gracefully curved and set back from the front of the seat. (Plate xiv.) The upholstered back was retained, though it was generally much simpler in outline and lower, the seat was upholstered in stuffover fashion, or had a "drop-in" seat, often in needlework which shows off very well on this shape, every

stitch being fully displayed. This kind of settee must have saved the embroideresses much work, as the scrolled upholstered arm must have absorbed a great deal of needlework, though this did not matter quite so much from an upholsterer's point of view as when silk and other piece textiles had to be cut up. The waste which must have occurred in fitting these elaborate scrolls with piece goods must have been appalling.

The last phase of the cabriole leg settee is that of the drop-in seat, claw and ball leg and splatted wood-work back corresponding to the beautiful chairs of the same type of fashioning. They must have been introduced late in the reign of Queen Anne, and both back and legs on the best of these are beautiful examples of the chair-maker's art. At this time the wood-work of furniture was again beginning to be considered of real importance and was no longer entirely overshadowed by the cost and splendour of the needlework, velvets and brocades which had for so long been the most expensive part of household gear.

Such a settee is illustrated in Fig. 22 which is in the Victoria and Albert Museum. This fine walnut settee has the "two chair" back, which is so much prized, and finely modelled claw

and ball feet. It may be called a typical "Queen Anne" settee, with its smoothly flowing lines and rich but restrained ornament.

The frames of these settees, while following the general lines of two armchairs side by side (the inner arms and one pair of legs being omitted), do not exactly coincide in their pro-



FIGURE 22.

SETTEE. EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (V. AND A.).

portions with the hypothetical chairs. The backs are much broader than they would be in chairs, and are also often a little higher, the seats are wider and the centre leg faces forward. The outer leg, of course, facing sideways as usual. Sometimes there are only four legs, but



in most there are six and there are a few three-back settees having eight.

A pathetic attempt is sometimes made by reconstructors of old furniture to build up settees out of single chairs pieced together with new work. Such unhappy compositions scream so loudly the story of their origin that whoever buys them deserves nothing better!

These wooden back settees are almost always of the type with drop-in seats and veneered seat rail and splat. Additional ornament is provided by shallow carving on the knees and elsewhere, which generally takes the form of a carved shell. The splats sometimes also have a little carved ornament at the edges generally in the form of a kind of acanthus in very shallow relief. There is a gracious suavity of line about the more restrained of these pieces, which, together with the perfect grain and rich colour of the wood, makes up a harmonious whole.

Settees with stuffed backs continued to be made in the early eighteenth century, but in decreasing numbers. The double chair, known nowadays as a "love-seat", was made in the upholstered style. "Love-seat" is a quite modern term, and we do not find it in contemporary use.



## PLATE IX

## UPHOLSTERED CHAIR

The most interesting upholstered chairs are those covered with the original embroidery, and this fine specimen from the Victoria and Albert Museum is a very good example. It has the rare carved wood shell finish in the middle of the front, and the full curve of the cabriole is displayed in perfection. Though the legs are simple they are beautifully designed.

*Width* 1' 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". *Depth* 1' 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".





Settees of almost all these types are occasionally found in either walnut (not veneered) fruit or beech wood painted black. In some cases the shell on the back is, or has been, gilt. I fancy these were made for rooms where lacquer cabinets and Chinese painted wall hangings formed an *ensemble* "in the Indian taste." They were, of course, much cheaper to make than veneered walnut, and at the present day are not valued so highly, though they are charming possessions.

In many cases the paint on such black furniture has worn badly and looks very shabby, and owners are much inclined to strip it off leaving the wood in its natural state. They will be well advised not to do so. The wood, even if actually walnut, is seldom of good figure, and does not attain a satisfactory surface without most elaborate treatment.

Unless extremely dilapidated, a good washing of the paint with a neutral soap, followed by several light applications of linseed oil, will work wonders. The oil should be left on for a few minutes, then wiped over, the application being repeated weekly until a satisfactory surface results.

If repainting is resorted to, use a brown black and not a blue black, and be sure only good



honest paint in three thin coats is used, not any patent lacquer or enamel finish. It may perhaps be news to some of my readers that not only did our forebears of some two centuries ago paint their furniture black, they also painted and grained cheaper woods to look like walnut. "'Tis true 'Tis sad 'Tis sad 'tis true," but it is so!

Settees, like all other walnut furniture, are copied to the utmost perfection nowadays, and if a large price is being paid it is always well to have an expert's opinion, plus a written guarantee from the seller. This latter is, of course, seldom obtainable if the purchase is being made at an auction, so unless you can be fairly sure of your judgment or absolutely know the history of the piece it is well to abstain from giving more than you would not mind giving for a reproduction.

As to knowing the history of a piece, I was talking to a dealer about some prices obtained at a sale at a historic house, when it was generally assumed that the furniture on sale had remained in the original position since it was made. He told me that he had sold quantities of what he called "very poor stuff" to the owner about six months before the sale, and that he recognised on the view day these

very things deputising for the fine pieces which the house was reputed to contain. One chair in particular fetched five times what he had sold it for. "And I had made my profit," he said with a chuckle.

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## CHAPTER V

### STOOLS

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**I**N the seventeenth century the very strict rules of etiquette were carefully followed by all with any pretensions to gentle breeding. Many of their details seem to us to verge upon the ludicrous, if they do not quite pass the boundary between the sublime and the ridiculous. Who might wear red heels and who might not was a matter of moment, the correct cock of a hat, the "nice conduct of a clouded cane," were matters which might make or mar a man.

Women, of course, were even more insistent on the correct observance of the rules of propriety and precedence, and took active steps to see that they were carried out.

Sometimes curious results were arrived at by sticking to the letter of the law, such as that

when those ladies who were entitled by reason of their rank to sit on stools in the presence of Royalty resolutely refused to sit on the chairs which were provided as substitutes, as they had "the right of the *tabouret*."

Stools and chairs were still differentiated as late as the date of the marriage of Frederick Prince of Wales, eldest son of George I (that "Poor Fred, who was alive and is dead"), as we learn by the story that his sisters refused to sit on the stools provided for them at the wedding banquet on the ground that the bride and bridegroom had chairs.

"Hoity-toity!" one can imagine the Court exclaiming as the young ladies waited in the ante-chamber for seats which they considered suitable to their rank to be provided:

Stools during the Walnut period are mainly in the nature of survivals, and being made in most instances for great houses and the Royal palaces, are generally of extremely fine workmanship.

Obviously chairs were more comfortable and convenient for general use, and they very soon superseded stools in ordinary houses, and I should think that for every walnut stool that survives there are quite ten chairs, in spite of the fact that all single chairs are more likely



to break than stools by reason of the inherent weakness at the junction of the back with the seat.

Walnut stools, therefore, are treasure-trove indeed when found in reasonably good condition, especially if the original covering of needlework or rich fabric is intact. But even without it they are much sought for at the present moment when so many people—men as well as women—

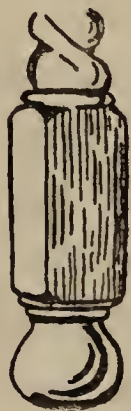


FIGURE 23.

FOOT OF CHARLES II STOOL.

are engaged in making reproductions of seventeenth century designs in *petit point*. A stool top is a delightful piece to work. It does not entail so much labour as a chair cover, and is a thing complete in itself—while a single worked chair, though there is more of the needlework, always appears a little lonely, one looks round instinctively for its brethren who, perhaps, like

those children in *Peter Pan*, inhabit the "Never Never Land."

Early walnut stools have caned seats and turned legs and stretchers, both bead, bobbin and twisted turning is found. The feet resemble Fig. 23 or Fig. 24.

Genuine examples of this kind are very rare, but there are many reproductions of good quality which have been on the market for a



FIGURE 24.

FOOT OF CHARLES II STOOL.

sufficient number of years to be found in sales and at second-hand dealers. They would not deceive anyone who had had the opportunity of handling a genuine example, but with the signs of usage and in not too good a light they might prove a snare to some. They are generally slighter in build than the real thing, the legs and stretchers have wider spaces, and they have obviously been artificially coloured. By

## PLATE X

## CHAIR COVERED WITH NEEDLEWORK

This chair is more noteworthy for the beauty of the needlework than for its woodwork. Though not particularly fine in stitch, the colouring is very effective. The design is repeated on the fellow chair with the arrangement of the colours transposed.

Early eighteenth century.

[V. AND A.]









the way, many of these reproductions are made in oak.

The walnut stools with carved scrolled stretchers are of different shapes, either almost square, decidedly oblong or rounded.

These stools are very attractive pieces, but unfortunately are very rare. The stretchers are tenoned into reserves in the turned legs. They have small round feet turned in one with the legs, or in a few cases the curious "Spanish foot" which added decidedly to their stability, though not, in my opinion, so attractive in appearance as the ball foot. However, any stool of the period is a rarity and a desirable addition to a collection.

Rather more elaborate, and yet not so "busy" as many ornate pieces of furniture, are the stools with scrolled legs and scrolled and carved stretchers. These are undoubtedly "Court Furniture" made for Royal establishments and other places where the etiquette of the "*tabouret*" or stool might have to be observed if Royalty were present. They are rare and beautiful things.

It should be noted that while chairs with similar legs to those of the stools in question have the front legs elaborately scrolled and carved, their back legs are much plainer as a

rule, being sometimes turned comparatively simply. They are also very often splayed out backwards to give stability to the chair when the occupant was leaning back. In the case of stools, however, the legs are all alike and so are the stretchers. This difference is mentioned because I have seen the legs of a chair—probably one with a hopelessly damaged back—fitted round a new seat, in the likeness of a four-legged stool. They were very good legs, too, and must have belonged to a handsome chair originally, but as a stool the effect was somewhat grotesque. The owner of the shop explained that it was a stool made to stand against the wall! He would have done better to put an upholstered back which *might* have passed muster, but I suppose was tempted by the extra price obtainable for a stool. Someone bought it I suppose, because it disappeared from the shop within a short time.

If two similar chairs are available a fairly convincing stool can be constructed, but there is a subtle difference in the curves of the legs of chairs and stools—stools as a rule are a little higher than the corresponding chairs.

Stools with the smooth serpentine stretcher are fairly scarce, though often reproduced, and the type illustrated by Marot with tapering

square section legs dowed through the stretchers to a circular or square shaped foot has only a few survivals. In its various forms this may perhaps be considered the distinctively "William and Mary" type. Few seem to have been made with the simple "mushroom" or "inverted teacup" over a round tapering leg—it was possibly too simple a pattern for the ceremonial use for which most of these stools must have been made.

In almost every pattern long stools very much like the smaller size but long enough to accommodate four, five or even six persons are to be found. Possibly such seats were made for antechambers where gentlemen-in-waiting or maids-of-honour often had to pass long and tedious hours in attendance on Royalty or the heads of those great families which kept up almost Royal state. They may in the longer sizes perhaps have been used as day-beds or couches when placed in dressing-rooms and the private sitting-rooms.

In the well known scene in Congreve's *Way of the World* where "Lady Wishfort" meditates on the most effective way of impressing her anxiously awaited suitor she says:

"I'll receive him in my little dressing-room—there's a couch—Yes, yes I'll give the first



impression on a couch. I won't lie neither, but loll and lean upon one elbow, with one foot dangling off, jogging in a thoughtful way." (Act IV, Scene I.) Which gives a good idea of the way in which such seats might be used on occasion.

The scrolled leg was the fore-runner of the cabriole, but even in a large series of stools there seems to be a very decided gap between the most cabriole-like of the scrolled legs and the early cabrioles. The first English-made examples are probably directly inspired by Continental models which had gone ahead of our insular development.

The early cabriole stools have stretchers—generally turned—to connect the legs, as the construction was not sufficiently masterly for the added strength given by their support to be dispensed with. See Plate xv, 2. In some cases possibly the legs, minus stretchers, may have seemed awkward and uncomfortably fragile-looking to those who were accustomed to the more robust appearance of earlier stools, and the stretchers were only added to convince the (possibly bulky) occupant that it would support her weight. Certainly one cabriole-legged walnut stool in my possession would be perfectly able to seat Daniel Lambert if

need be without the help of its stretchers. Stretchers continued to be used, especially on country made pieces, until the end of the eighteenth century on chairs where they certainly were not necessary for strength.

The stretched cabriole stools are seldom claw and ball footed—I have seen an illustration of one but have not seen one actually, and possibly the stool in the photograph may not have been in original condition. They generally have fairly slender legs and club feet, or are of the pseudo-cabriole type which follows a sinuous line terminating in a scroll.

All the types mentioned are upholstered in the “stuffover” fashion. That is to say the only woodwork visible is that of the legs, or, very rarely, a shell ornament on the middle of each side: the covering is finished at the edge by a fringe with elaborate ball and knotting work for the earlier ones and a scalloped valance or galloon for those made at the century’s end.

About 1700 the cabriole proper began to attain its full beauty. Personally my preference is for the plainer varieties, with very simple carving on the knees and that in low relief, so that the eye can follow the curve in an unbroken but subtle sweep from seat to

ground, such as that in Fig. 25. This stool, which is 1' 5½" high, 2' 4½" wide and 1' 4½" deep, is probably a dressing-stool rather than one of a set. The shells on the knees are beautifully carved in low relief, which enriches the effect without breaking the sweep of the curve in the least. The trilobe foot is somewhat unusual,

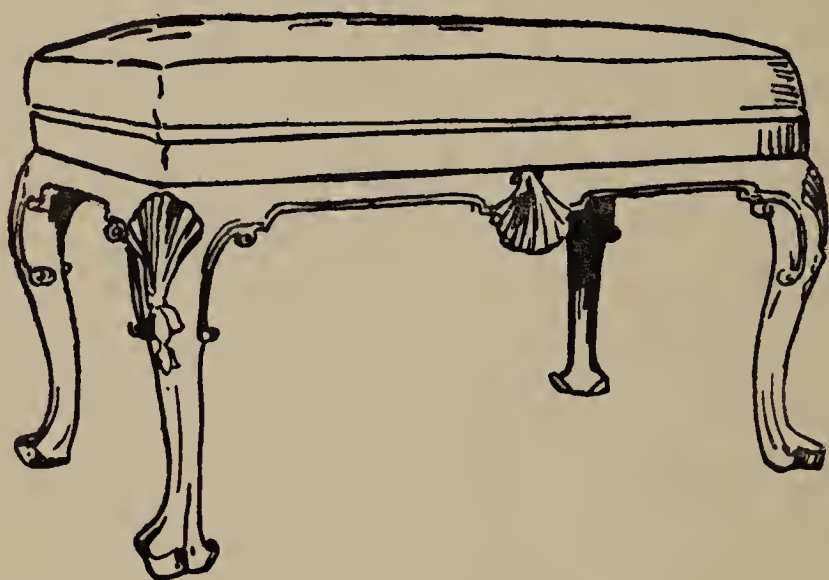


FIGURE 25.

QUEEN ANNE STOOL.

but very good in effect. It dates from the early eighteenth century.

Finely carved and magnificent in many ways as are the stools with masks and faces on the knees, they always recall to my mind the grotesques of mediæval days known as "Nid-Noddies." Bird heads do not strike me in quite the same way. They are generally so



disposed that their outline does not interfere with the cabriole curve proper, but take their places as brackets.

Among the most charming pieces of furniture in existence are the Queen Anne stools with exquisitely proportioned cabriole legs carved lightly on the knees with shells and pendant husks, the straight line at the bottom of the stuffover seat being broken by a slight upward curve of the wood-work over the legs at each corner.

Stuffover seats continued to be used sometimes on the earlier stretcherless cabriole stools. The full beauty of the woodwork is perhaps shown better in those later ones which have a drop-in seat and a walnut rail about three or four inches wide running round below the seat. Possibly drop-in seats may have been invented to facilitate the use of the fashionable chintzes as chair and stool covers, as the drop-in seats would allow the coverings to be removed with the minimum of trouble for washing or renewal.

The later walnut cabriole legs on stools are stouter than their fore-runners. Though still furnished with claw and ball feet, there is a suggestion of a stately tread rather than a leap, but heaviness and squatness are avoided.



## PLATE XI

## UPHOLSTERED CHAIRS

- (1) Another type of upholstered chair also marred by modern covering.

This illustration shows a chair in the state in which it was bought from a country dealer. Beneath the bottom of the cover there is a further three inches of walnut which adds much beauty to the curve of the legs.

- (2) This upholstered chair has the broad seat and well padded back which characterises its type. It dates from the reign of Queen Anne. Possibly at one time rather more of the woodwork of the legs was visible. In many such chairs the curve of the top of the leg broke the straight line of the front. Messrs. Phillips, Ltd., Hitchin.



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The full type of cabriole comes just at the period when mahogany was beginning to take its place beside walnut as a fashionable wood, and the supercession of walnut by the harder wood marks also the end of the stool, as examples in mahogany are few.

It will be gathered that buyers of walnut stools must be wary and on their guard. Let the buyer beware, is a good motto for the purchaser of any walnut pieces, but with stools the need for care is emphatic. Genuine stools are decidedly rare; they are also in great demand, and while the price for genuine examples is higher than for chairs, reproductions are far easier and cheaper to make. Small wonder therefore that those who specialise in copying antique models are making them literally by the hundred.

There is often no intention to deceive on the part of the actual makers. They supply a demand, and do not defraud their customers, many of whom do a genuine business and sell the goods at commercial prices as reproductions of old models, which people are glad to buy, finding them prettier and more useful than the eccentric lines of *L'Art Nouveau*, and less expensive than the small amount of individual and really artistic work which is now produced.



Unfortunately some of these copies get into the hands of unscrupulous people who doctor them up with stains and polishes so as to resemble genuine antiques very closely indeed. The feet are treated with acid which gives a spurious effect of wear and usage to the wood. One leg is perhaps knocked a little loose and strengthened with an iron angle, while old webbing and sacking are used in the upholstery, and a piece of old silk from a sun-perished curtain is used as a cover, through which part of the horse-hair is allowed to protrude. These inexpensive manœuvres accomplished, the counterfeit presentment of a fifty pound stool is ready for someone with more money than knowledge to "pick up" for thirty-five pounds, having cost the seller seven to ten at most. Needless to say such pieces do not take in the collector who seriously studies good genuine pieces before he starts to buy, but it is really extraordinary that people who would not think of buying silver without a hall-mark, or a horse without a vet.'s certificate of soundness, will allow themselves to be imposed on by the small proportion of dishonest people who are a disgrace to their trade.

It is, I think, a pity that there cannot be some kind of "Guild of Old Furniture Dealers"

who, armed with hammer and chisel, should be empowered to go about the country smashing up fakes and shams, more especially those "restorations" where everything has been restored except one leg.

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## CHAPTER VI

### BEDS

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**T**HE collector who seeks an English late seventeenth century bedstead with ornamental walnut posts is doomed to disappointment. If I were to say such a thing does not exist I suppose that from somewhere or another examples would arrive and confront me, but I do not know of a genuine four-poster bed of William and Mary's reign which has walnut woodwork of any real decorative importance.

The posts and other woodwork are generally made of beech, and though sometimes carved, are tightly covered with the fabric of which the bed hangings are composed, even as regards the most elaborate and intricate mouldings. (Plate xvi).

The idea sounds a most extraordinary one, and anyone who had not seen such a bed would probably imagine that not only was the principle

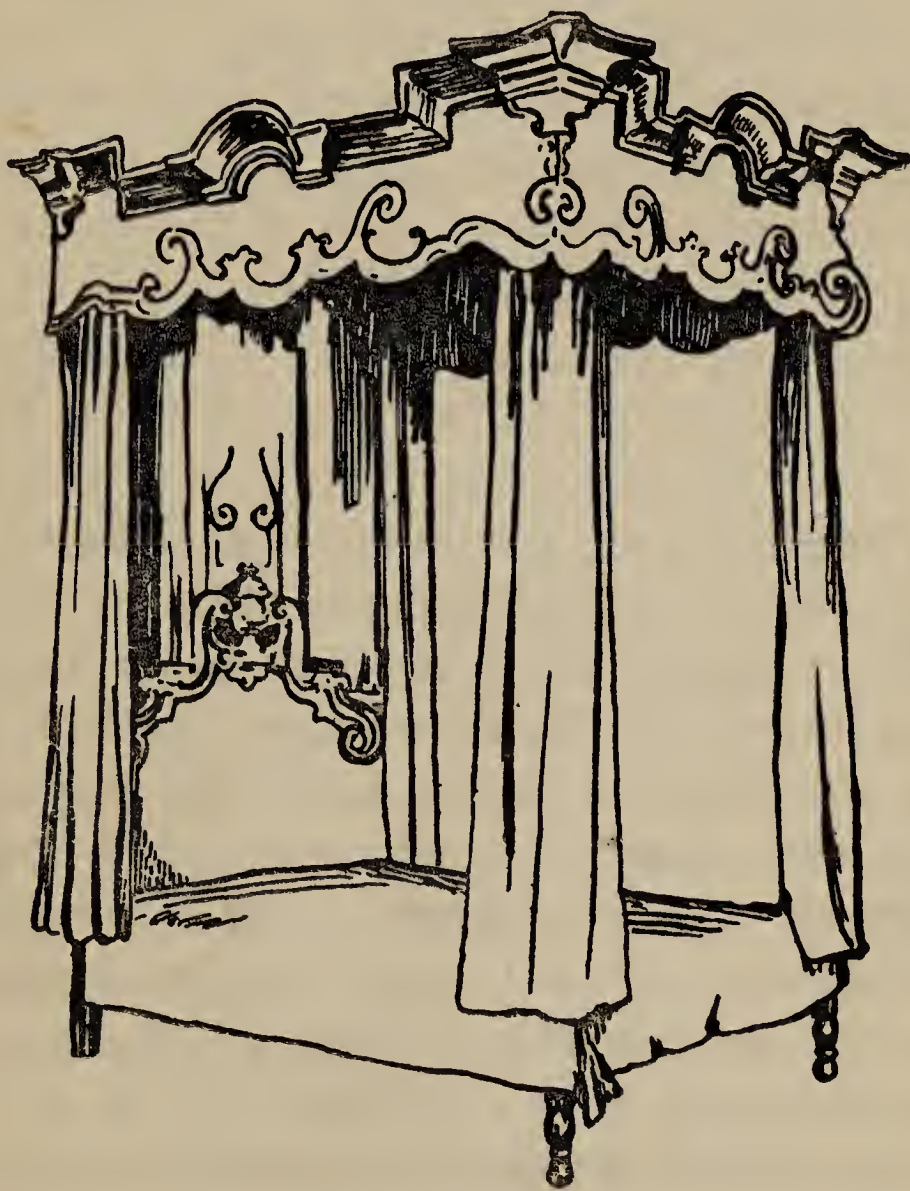


FIGURE 26.

BED. EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (V. AND A.).

artistically unsound but that the result would be hideous. Yet even at the present day, when



the velvet has worn threadbare and the gold has lost much of its splendour, if prejudice is laid aside, there is beauty as well as stateliness to be found in these wonderful masterpieces of the upholsterer's craft. (Fig. 26).

Really rich beds of this kind, were, of course, enormously expensive, and were among the most valued possessions of even the wealthiest. King William himself bought such a bed second-hand from the Earl of Jersey for his State Bedroom at Hampton Court and had it relined for his own use. They were of great size and height, even seventeen and eighteen feet posts were not uncommon. These beds, in varying degrees of splendour, were found in every house, the richer members of the middle classes having at least one hung bed if not more. The hangings, of course, might be of richer or poorer fabrics. Linen, plain or embroidered, silk of the utmost magnificence, moreen and chintz were all used. Chintz, however, though not as expensive as silk, was not a cheap fashion in the seventeenth century and was considered a suitable material for "best" beds, though probably not for state beds. It was not an every day material that could be used by the general run of country folk, but was an expensive fad of the up-to-date

fashionables who, followed where Royalty led.

Queen Mary, of course, held this fabric in high esteem. It must have been a delightful change from the rich heavy materials which, however carefully they were tended, must have harboured dust and dirt, to say nothing of other disagreeables, having regard to the lack of attention to personal cleanliness which was so very usual at this time. This custom of making the upholstery the leading feature of beds survived until Chippendale's day.

The early eighteenth century beds had the material strained over wooden mouldings, but they were somewhat more formal than the earlier beds, the trimmings of galloon being less fussy than the fringes used earlier, and the plumes in vases, which were considered so impressive earlier, gradually passed out of date, though they have survived in the sombre adornment of hearses almost to the present day and may, I believe, still be seen in remote districts.

There were also beds which had no canopy or foot, these consisted of an ornamental head-piece and the bedstead itself.

I once saw the moth-eaten remnants of one at a farmhouse sale, a few fragments of velvet still adhering to the carved moulding. It was

## PLATE XII

## LACE BOX TOP

The top of the lace box illustrated on Page 275, Figure 45. It is decorated with marquetry of various woods. The groundwork of the top is not of cross-cut wood as is the veneer of the sides. The wood is of natural tone and the effect is very rich and harmonious.

*Height*  $5\frac{1}{2}$ ". *Length*  $21\frac{1}{8}$ ". *Depth*  $6\frac{3}{4}$ ".

[V. AND A.]









a very tragical end for what had doubtless at one time figured in some fine house in a small or secondary bedroom.

Figure 26, on page 101, the original of which may be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum, represents a typical upholstered bed of the plainer kind. It shows the type which would be found in ordinary rooms in large houses

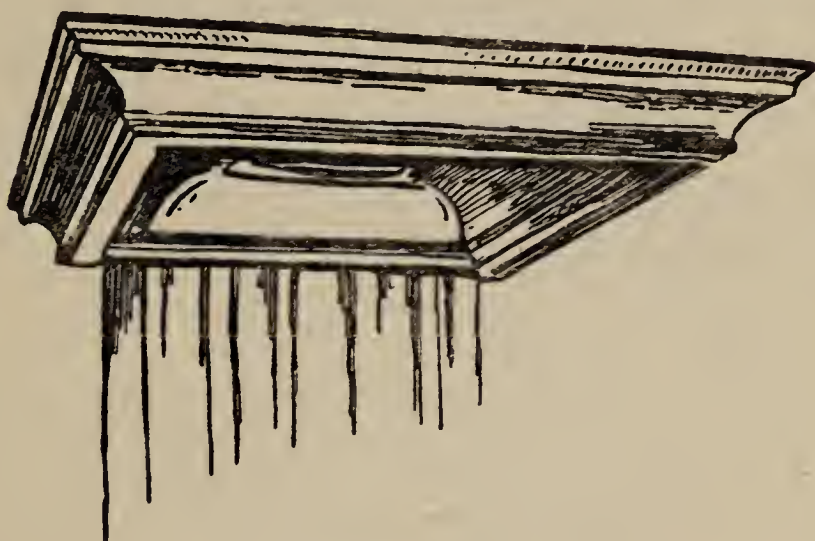


FIGURE 27.

TESTER OF A BED, *c.* 1740.

and in use by the general run of well-to-do people in the early eighteenth century.

It has a canopy and valance of red moreen, a kind of ribbed material with a watered surface trimmed with green galloon. The mouldings are tightly covered with material. When it had all its original upholstery including valances, no wood could be seen. Its date is

about 1700. Height 9'  $\frac{1}{2}$ ", width 4' 6", length 6'  $2\frac{1}{2}$ ".

Figure 27, represents the canopy of a bedstead which is made of pinewood covered with red watered moreen. It dates from about 1740, and is simpler than those of earlier date, but is close covered with material in the fashion of the early eighteenth century. (V. and A.).

It is, of course, very unlikely that a genuine four-post upholstered bed of this kind in a condition worth acquiring will ever appear unheralded at a sale or elsewhere. Probably the few survivors are all well known.

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## CHAPTER VII

### WALNUT TABLES

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**T**HERE are in existence a large number of smallish walnut tables which resemble each other in many ways. They are generally somewhere about three feet long and about two feet to two feet six inches in breadth. They are decorated in various fashions, sometimes with "oyster" veneer and often with marquetry, generally enclosed in panels by three lines of stringing. (Fig. 29 on page 109).

The designs of the panels consist in many cases of flowers often with the addition of birds and acanthus. The marquetry is carried out in wood of many different kinds, sometimes with the addition of natural ivory for jessamine flowers and green-stained ivory for leaves.



This kind of marquetry has a strong Continental flavour, and it is doubtful whether much of it is really of English origin. In many cases it appears likely that while the table itself is of native workmanship, the decoration was made by, or under the supervision of, a foreign



FIGURE 28.

LEG OF STAND, *c.* 1675.

craftsman—probably a Dutchman. Later they lose this alien tang, and the fine marquetry of birds, flowers and foliage combined with acanthus-like scrolls shows that our native workmen soon picked up the knack of fine

veneering and proved themselves very competent. The centre panel of the table tops increased in importance as time went on, sometimes occupying almost the whole area of the top.

The legs of these tables are of different

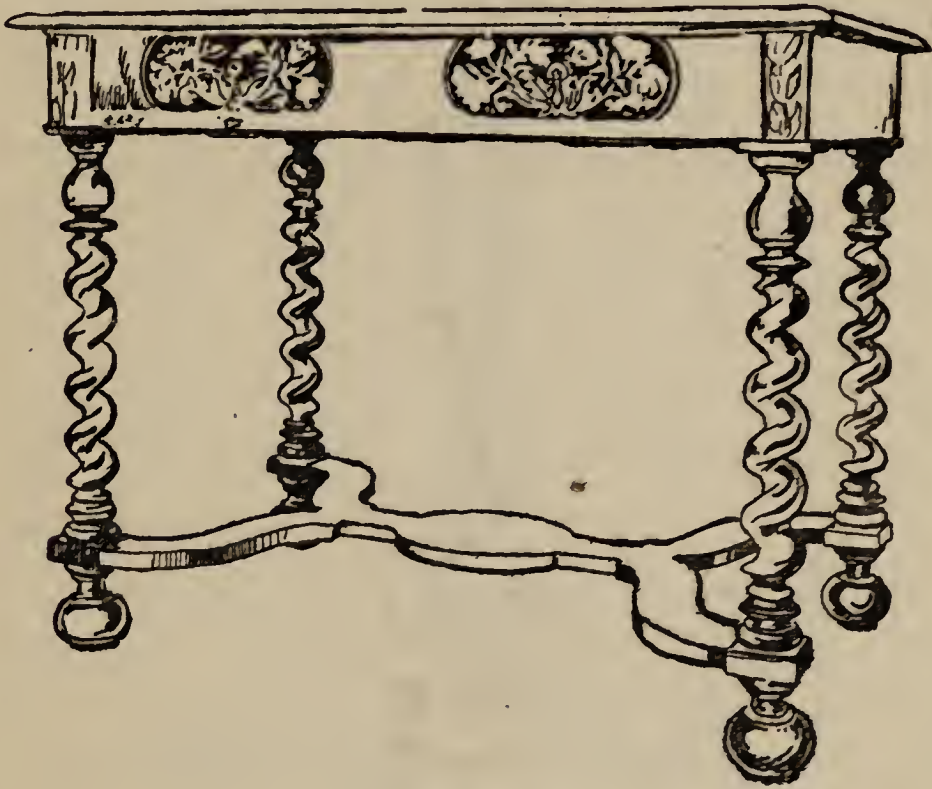


FIGURE 29.

MARQUETRY TABLE (SEE PLATE XXIX).

types. The earliest and scarcest, perhaps, are those with flat S-shaped scrolls instead of actual legs. (Fig. 28.) The surface of the scrolls is veneered almost invariably. These scrolls are connected by stretchers, and ball feet are

dowelled on through the stretcher. Such tables probably date from Charles the Second's reign. (Plate xvi).

Following them come the legs of the twist type turned out of solid walnut, similar to those of the tables in Fig. 29 and Plate xvii. They are invariably connected by stretchers,



FIGURE 30.

OCTAGONAL LEG OF TABLE, *c.* 1690.

and feet of the bun or onion type are dowelled on to them through the stretchers as shown in Fig. 29. This fine table has the usual marquetry panels on the front of the drawers which correspond with the beautiful top, of which a photograph is reproduced. (Plate xxix). In William and Mary's time the legs



are generally turned, one of the typical fashions of the time being the mushroom or inverted cup. There were many other patterns, however, such as the octagonal pattern, shown in Fig. 30.

Tables of this kind are almost certainly toilet-tables, and were probably made *en suite* with *guéridons* to stand at the sides and a square mirror to hang over them. We can be sure of these being toilet-tables because complete suites of this kind exist. The gorgeous sets covered with silver at Windsor and Knole reproduce the wooden ones very exactly, and were no doubt made in the style which was in fashion at the dates when they were commissioned.

Possibly for the plainer sets tall candle-stands on a single turned leg were substituted for the elaborate *guéridons*. Sconces, too, sometimes figured on each side of the mirrors, and a dressing stool stood before the table.

Towards the end of William and Mary's reign the cabriole leg for small tables was either developed out of the earlier scroll or perhaps arrived here from the Continent as a more or less accomplished fact. Certainly intermediate forms are scarce, and



## PLATE XIII

DAY BED, c 1685

The needlework is modern and replaces the original cane panel.

[V. AND A.]





the curves of even early walnut cabriole-legged tables have nothing tentative about them.

The typical cabriole-legged walnut dressing-table has three drawers, a smaller one in the middle and two deeper ones flanking it. The under framing is cut into serpentine forms resembling the curved crests of the walnut-framed mirrors of the time, which, no doubt, stood on it or hung behind it. The tops of these tables are generally of veneered wood, and have a plain crossband edging. They have often, at a later period, been turned into writing-tables, and leather or velvet has been sunk into the tops. I think this is seldom or never original. I have a very pretty table of this kind made of wych elm with the drawer fronts veneered with curled yew. This dates from the end of Queen Anne's reign. The exact place of these tables in the sequence of furniture can be judged fairly closely by the finish of the drawers which are described in Chapter I.

Rather larger tables were made with very finely carved cabriole legs, being possibly intended as pier tables or as side tables. They are rather too shallow for dressing-tables.



Copies of the early walnut tables are sometimes faked by skilful hands out of an incomplete chest of drawers—in fact the large price given for these tables compared to the chests of drawers might possibly be tempting enough to lead to a *good* chest being sacrificed. I have seen two such tables and they looked very well, except that the under-framing with drawers was a little too deep and the tops did not project over the under-framing enough. Twisted turned legs of a somewhat elaborate pattern were fitted, and the stretchers were veneered with old walnut taken, no doubt, from the remaining drawers. One of the tables was plain, but in the other case elaborate new panels of marquetry completed the *ensemble*.

Gate-leg tables are sometimes found in walnut, but they are scarce compared to those made of oak, and probably were not made in very large numbers, though “worm” has doubtless taken its toll. I do not think that the tops of these tables were ever decorated with elaborate floral marquetry. I have seen a gate-leg table so treated, but it was not convincing, though its history was quite a good one. That illustrated in Plate XX shows an intermediate form between the gate-

leg proper and the ordinary swing-leg card-table.

Walnut gate-legs sometimes have turned twist-legs, but oftener are of the modified baluster type of a rather slender kind and have either Spanish feet or simply turned ball feet. They are generally very graceful, and are so useful that they always rouse keener competition than most plain pieces.

I think they must have been the card-tables of the late seventeenth century, being a kind of hybrid between a real gate-leg and the typical card-table with swinging leg which held almost undisputed sway for two hundred years.

Card-tables proper were made with every kind of cabriole leg, some of them being of the quite simple club-foot type; the moving legs are hinged to the middle of the back of the under framing and there is a drawer in the front. There are often "dishes" or scoops for money or counters, and the corners are enlarged into square or circular "reserves" for candlesticks. The tops were originally covered with velvet edged with metallic gimp, the candle corners and scoops being left with a wooden surface uncovered with textile material.

A beautiful example of such a table from the Victoria and Albert Museum is shown in Fig. 31.

Some very fine walnut card-tables are covered with needlework. In some cases the design displays a hand of cards, a kind of design which

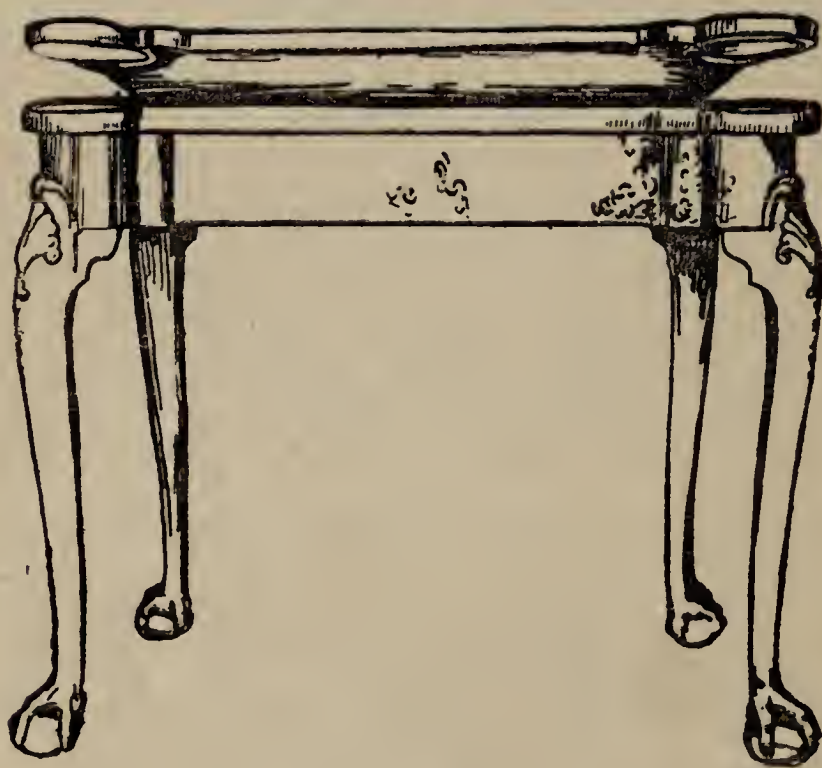


FIGURE 31.

QUEEN ANNE CARD TABLE (V. AND A.).

must, one would think, have proved somewhat confusing when the table was in use. Other tables have all-over needlework of variously coloured flowers of the kind which was so popular for furnishing purposes during this period.



The three-purpose table came into use at the end of the walnut period. When closed it answered as a side or pier-table, with the velvet top open it was used for cards, and an extra wooden flap was provided, ingeniously hinged to alternate with the velvet surface, thus providing a tea or supper table.

I am much inclined to think most dining-tables before about 1725 were made of oak. That there is an immense number of oak dining-tables with simple cabriole-type legs which date from this period is obvious to collectors who go to country sales and the smaller dealers to make their purchases. These tables extend by means of two flaps, generally to seven or eight feet in length. They appear to have been made in sets of two or three, and by this means a table to seat any number could be arranged in a few moments, which must have been a great advantage in an age when so many of the gentry kept open house.

Damask linen table-cloths were a more or less new fashion of this time and covered the dining-table to the ground, so probably the use of expensive wood was not thought necessary until, at a later period, the fashion of removing the cloth after



dinner made it worth while to use mahogany for tables.

There are a good many small walnut tables with cabriole legs which open out into plain square tea-tables. They were the predecessors of the useful tripod tea-tables of the mahogany era. Tripod tables were not made in walnut to any large extent, and many of those found are probably survivals of the use of this wood into a period when mahogany was usually employed. Plate XVIII is an exceptional piece.

There were not many small tables for various purposes made of walnut such as those which later were made in mahogany. A special washstand large or small was not made, the tiny basin or wig-stands were unknown, and even the compact if somewhat exigent accommodation of the enclosed washstand was unknown. No doubt people *did* wash, but it must have been piece-meal and uncomfortably, except in those rare establishments where there was a bathroom.

Girandoles or candlestands were, however, made, both in elaborate patterns for palatial establishments where they were generally of gilt or silvered wood, and of wood in plain or twisted turning for more ordinary use. They

generally consist of a small round top mounted on a long leg with three or four scrolls at the base. There were also floor candlesticks in which a candle-holder took the place of the flat table-like top.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### CUPBOARDS AND THE LIKE

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THERE are comparatively few independent cupboards dating from the latter part of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth which are made of walnut. There were, of course, many cupboards made in combination with bureaux, and as the upper stage over chests of drawers, but as a separate piece of furniture they are decidedly rare.

Amongst the extremely scarce pieces of walnut the glass-fronted china-cupboard is perhaps the scarcest. Those that do exist are almost all built on the same plan, which includes one, two or three drawers below and a cupboard of the same depth opening in two leaves above.

The glass consists of small panes which generally have a very shallow bevel, framed in a fairly wide half round moulding. The cornice is straight and the whole cupboard and drawer fronts are veneered.

The section with drawers is generally supported on ball feet. Gerreit Janson (or Gerard Johnson to give his name its anglicized form) made some china-cupboards for Queen Mary, and there is one like those described above at Hampton Court which may be from his hand. Lady Wolseley had one with exceptionally large panes of glass, but almost all of these cupboards have glass in really small pieces, as it was, of course, very expensive at the time when they were made. Copies of such pieces have been made in great numbers, but they mostly have glass at the sides as well as the front to make them lighter and more graceful looking. I do not think that an untouched original exists with glass sides.

Small glass-fronted corner cupboards were made from the days of William and Mary. I am inclined to think that in many cases the glass was originally silvered and has been cleaned off or replaced with clear. These pretty cupboards have either one large pane or four small ones, and the front edges of the shelves



## PLATE XIV.

## SETTEE

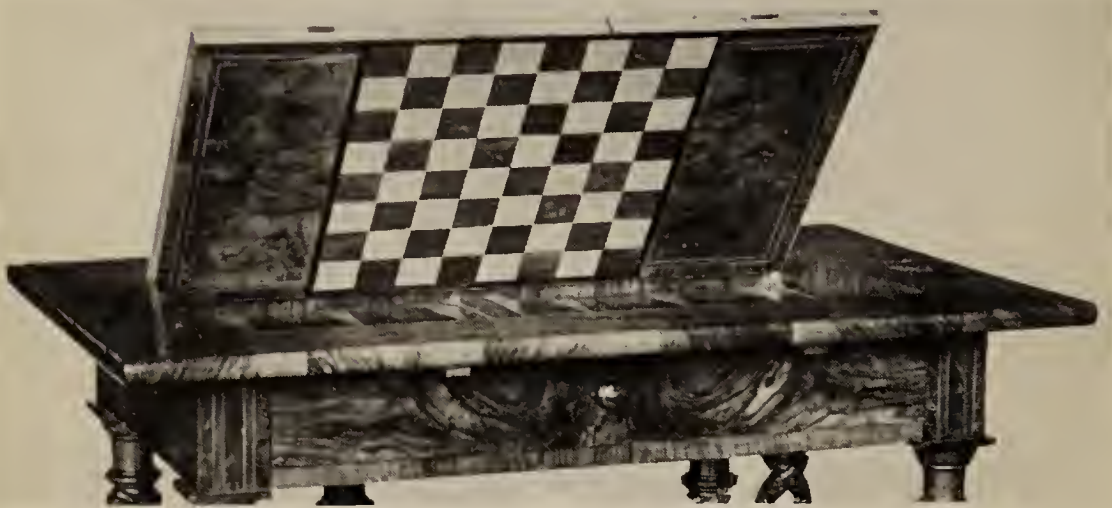
This magnificent settee dates from the early eighteenth century, and is a very fine example. The legs are beautifully curved and the feet are particularly well modelled.

[V. AND A.]





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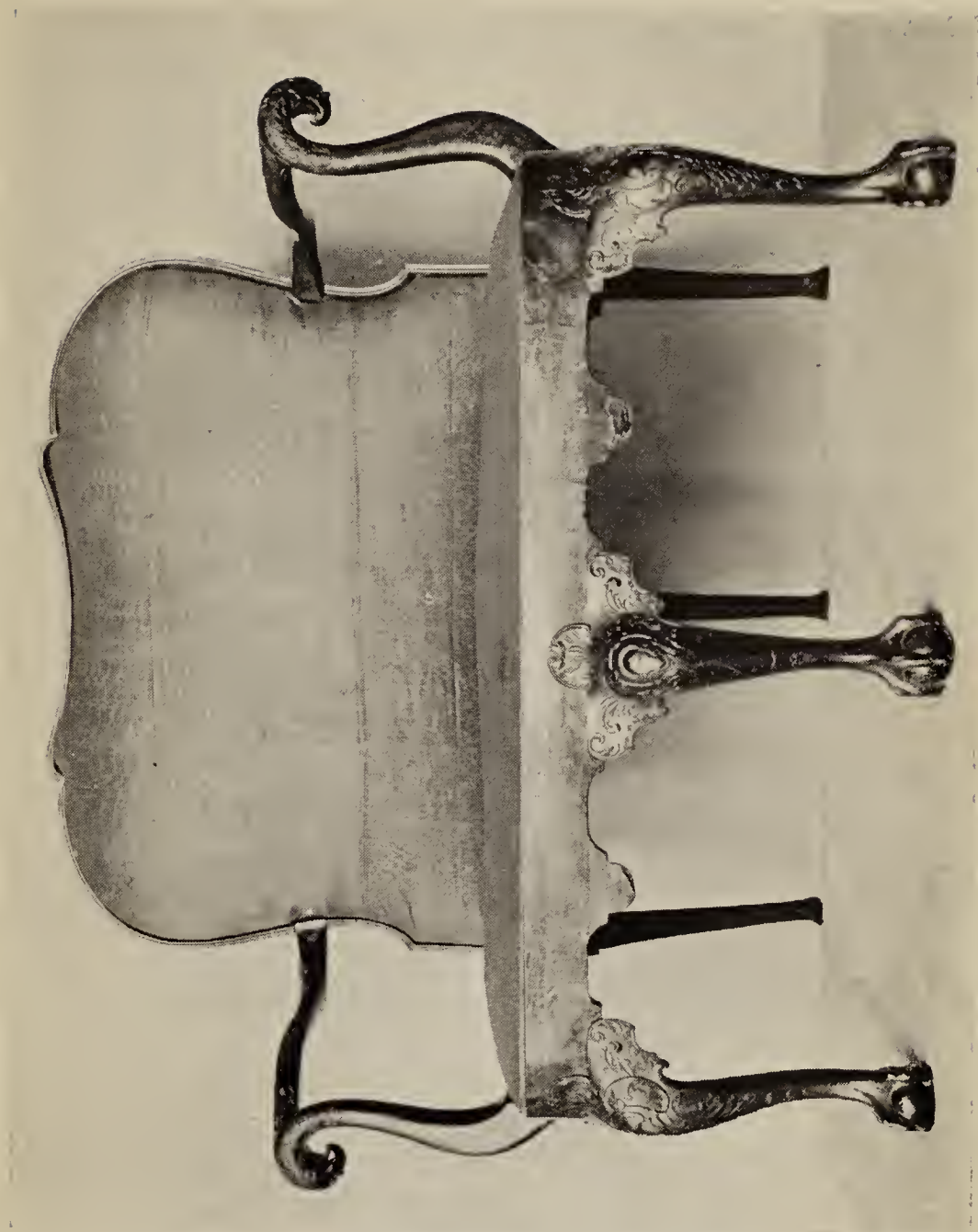


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### GAMES TABLE.

This table is a little unusual in that it has six legs, otherwise it resembles many of the tables of the late seventeenth century. The top has a simple design of stars which emphasises the beauty of the finely grained walnut veneer, and the legs are beautifully turned 'double bine' fashion. It is veneered with finely grained walnut, the legs being, of course, solid walnut. Height  $2' 5\frac{1}{2}''$ . Top  $3' 2\frac{1}{8}'' \times 2' 0\frac{3}{4}''$ . *V. and A.*

1. Table with top closed.
2. The top of same table open.







are shaped in serpentine lines. In the delightful doll's room, now at the Victoria and Albert Museum, which for so long one had to journey to Bethnal Green to see, there is a charming glass-fronted corner cupboard with a clear pane.

Book-cases are as scarce as china-cabinets. Books seem very often to have been stored on shelves which lined the room entirely, or filled a niche or recess, and were therefore of an architectural character rather than ordinary movable domestic furniture. The best known examples of movable book-shelves are the "Pepys" book-shelves at Magdalene College, Cambridge. These each consist of two stages of shelves enclosed by locked cupboard doors 7' 9" high and 4' 7" wide. These bookcases are, however, made of oak but, except for the carving, are in the style of walnut furniture.

China and glass ware, both useful and ornamental, was kept in recesses in the wall either fitted with cupboard doors or open, which are known as "beaufait" cupboards. These were generally fitted on either side the chimney breast or as corner cupboards. There was in many cases an ornamental coving at the top which in early examples in fine houses often resembled a shell of the scallop kind, but as they descended in the social scale, was just

smoothly rounded. The serpentine shaping of the edges of the shelves is a noticeable feature of these cupboards and adds much to their picturesqueness. The doors are in some few cases glazed with small panes, but this is not usual.

On the whole the collecting novice is well advised if he examines any glass-fronted cupboard he is buying very carefully in every particular, especially so if it is a rather top-heavy looking cupboard with round-topped doors set on a table-like stand with drawers, turned legs, and stretchers. This type has been evolved out of the inner consciousness of the maker of "period" furniture to meet the demand for walnut china cabinets, and is invariably a piece of modern construction, though portions such as a drawer or two or even the doors may be old.

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## CHAPTER IX

### MIRRORS

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**D**URING the Age of Walnut, looking-glass of every description was very scarce and very expensive. It was naturally much valued and extremely fashionable.

The Venetians had been for ages the great glass-makers for the whole of Europe, and supplied England until the seventeenth century with all the looking-glass which was used here. There were also "Stele glasses" made of a metallic compound polished to a high degree, and having a good reflecting surface but blackish in tone. In them the visage was seen reflected "as in a glass darkly." But by the end of the seventeenth century English people had learnt the art of making good glass plates.



Even as early as 1620 the Venetian envoy wrote about our looking-glass to his chiefs: "There are many English who work admirably, and the crystal attains a beauty not sensibly inferior, but of quite equal quality to that of Murano which used once to have the pre-eminence."\*

Soon after the Restoration, the Duke of Buckingham had his celebrated manufactory at Greenwich in full swing. Evelyn visited it in 1673 and highly commended its products.

Still Venetian glass plates were not superseded entirely, because in 1667 we find John Greene, a member of the Glass Sellers' Company, sending orders for mirrors to his correspondent in Venice.

The Vauxhall plate is a very fine mirror as a rule, giving a clear deep reflection, but apt to have a certain amount of distortion in the larger pieces. It is usually edged with a very shallow bevel which shows up well as a finish, but is as a matter of fact so slight that on passing the finger-tips over it is hardly felt. These plates continued to be made until the end of the eighteenth century, and the value of a mirror of this kind is always considerably

\* "*The Glass Trade in England in the Seventeenth Century*,"—  
Francis Buckley.

more than when an ordinary glass fills the frame, while a modern bevelled plate is a positive eyesore.

Sometimes, especially towards the close of the seventeenth century and the first ten years or so of the eighteenth, it was very customary to engrave or cut patterns on the surface of the glass—a star and arabesques are the most usual motifs. Cyphers and coronets are also found on special mirrors. Such ornaments enhance the pecuniary value of the mirror considerably. Values are, however, now judged differently, and while in the reign of Charles II a looking-glass would be much more costly than its frame, nowadays a fine marquetry mirror frame certainly exceeds in value the actual glass.

One of the problems which confront the furnishing collector is what to do in the case of a mirror which is too much tarnished to be comfortably used as a dressing-glass. Some people have the old glass done away with, replacing it with new, others have it re-silvered, others again leave it as it is and make the best of it. Another alternative is possible, and I have carried it out very successfully.

A new glass of the thinnest kind is cut to size. The two glasses are laid silvered sides together with tissue paper between, and both

are put back into the frames. The woodwork is almost always rebated enough to do this if the pins are put in quite near the edge. A label is then stuck on to the backing to the effect that "The original glass is framed inside." This ensures that if at any time the glass is sold, the original plate can be replaced. It will be found that old glass if turned upside down or laid flat is apt to "crissel" and flake up. Having been long in one position the backing metal has adapted itself to that position and resents any change. I have seen a perfectly good upright mirror run into long streaks when placed horizontally.

*Toilet Mirrors.*—The early toilet glasses of Charles the Second's reign were nearly square without a base or supports at the sides. They generally stood on a table and were *en suite* with the toilet apparatus or matched the table and guèridons. In this latter case they appear to have been of rather larger proportions and hung on the wall, completing a very attractive ensemble. There were extremely luxurious examples made for those who followed, or perhaps I should say, led, Court fashions, some being entirely covered with silver. There were, of course, simpler ones for those who could not afford, or, like Evelyn, disapproved of, the



rather senseless expenditure involved in such display, and they are very attractive.

The first toilet mirrors of the swinging kind appear to have been introduced between 1680 and 1690. They must have "filled a felt want," because they seem to have been made at once in considerable numbers.

They were generally made in walnut veneer with a narrow gilt gesso ornamental band next the glass. They often have a shaped cresting over the top of the glass. The supports of the earlier ones are turned, and generally finish with a small brass finial. They are mounted in very many cases on charming little enclosed ranges of drawers exactly like miniature bureaux. They were apparently meant to contain not only toilet requisites but also writing materials, letters, small books and papers. One in my possession has a range of tiny shaped front drawers topped by a row of pigeon holes. The sloping front when shut encloses the drawers, or it can be let down at will to form a writing-slab. Below it are four more drawers, the ornaments between them forming the fronts of "secret" receptacles. On the front slope is a ledge which would serve either as a book-rest or music stand. Like all these walnut looking-glass stands it is a little



## PLATE XV

## STOOLS

- (1) This plain stool which is probably one of a large set, shows the simpler style in use at the end of the seventeenth century. The fringe is not calculated to show these pseudo-cabriole legs at their best, being more suited for chairs where there is a "break" of two or three inches before the curve of the leg starts. Angular "diamond" feet like the feet of this stool were much used at this period.

[V. AND A.]

- (2) A fine stool of very early eighteenth century date. The legs show a further development of the style of those on Stool 1, being a few years later in date.



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masterpiece of the cabinet-maker's art, and until I bought it had been in the possession of one family since the seventeenth century, the tradition being that during a fire (of course, according to the legend, the *Great Fire*—but that is too early a date) it was saved by an ancestor from the flames, containing money and valuable papers. The owner removed the contents and presented the stand to the rescuer. With this history it has been passed on as a family treasure from father to son until the last survivor of the family felt she preferred "to take the cash and let the credit go," having no one to leave it to.

I think most of the seventeenth century toilet glasses are thus enclosed; they were also made in a similar style, decorated in lacquer. The shape of these mirrors is a tall oblong which was better calculated to reflect the taller headdresses worn when they were made than the square shape which framed the ringlets of an earlier mode so becomingly.

About the beginning of the eighteenth century the enclosing flap was abandoned, but many of the glasses are mounted on two or three tiers of drawers, often with curved and shaped fronts, but instead of curving inwards from side to middle the curve is a concave one from



top to bottom. The supports are often straight-sided and topped with a brass finial, the frame of the glass is prettily shaped off at the corners.

This type of glass was in vogue up to the time when mahogany superseded walnut—in fact I have a mahogany glass exactly of this pattern which differs in no way from those made of walnut, and it is the kind which, with very minor differences, continued in use until the lighter glasses of the so-called “Hepplewhite” and “Sheraton” types took their place.

All mirrors were very fashionable, and they were made in many different types. The fine marquetry framed mirrors made in the reign of Charles II in many cases no doubt were part of an elaborate toilet equipment, but they also formed an important feature in the decoration of the room. The frames are always of convex section, the moulding being arranged so that the glass stands out about three or four inches from the wall, less in the smaller sizes and a little more in very large ones. They generally have a shaped “cock’s-comb” crest at the top, though in many cases this is now missing. Examination of the back will show the sockets where this was fitted to the foundation of the frame if there has formerly been such an ornament. It adds considerably to the imposing

effect of the frame, but though it adds to the pecuniary value of a frame to be in its original condition, they certainly look very well when it has been lost.

The marquetry and veneer on these frames is found of every kind used in the seventeenth century. Some are of quite plain walnut veneer, the grain cut so as to run at right angles to the moulding. Oystered frames are extremely handsome, but are rare in comparison to the marquetry frames. Floral marquetry is generally somewhat less closely grouped and the acanthus a less important feature in early frames than in the later. In some of the first made there are jessamine flowers and leaves of white and green stained ivory. A very handsome type is that of the second stage of floral marquetry in which the design is confined to reserves on an ebony ground edged with a triple line of black and white.

An illustration is given on Plate xxx of an oval panel which decorates the side of a fine mirror frame in my possession. The design is carried out in various coloured woods on an ebony ground. The bird is a very usual—almost universal—feature in marquetry designs of this character, and the acanthus-like scrolls are also absolutely typical of the second floral period.

The third style of marquetry—the seaweed pattern, with its elaborate tracery formally arranged is the most uncommon pattern for these mirror frames. Probably they were going somewhat out of fashion by the time it came into vogue. In these the pattern is often worked in dark wood on light reserves edged with triple stringing. These designs are no doubt based to some extent on Boulle's marquetry of metal and tortoiseshell, the idea of which was brought to this country by refugees. Possibly a few pieces may actually have been imported which emanated from the Boulle ateliers. At all events the great *ébéniste's* work would be thoroughly familiar to a considerable number of the Court, Marot having been one of his pupils.

Much admired at the end of the century were the glass framed mirrors such as we see at Hampton Court. Some of these mirrors may be of English workmanship, but the greater number were imported from Venice. The larger mirrors had to be built up out of separate pieces as the makers were unable to make sheets large enough to fill the spaces. Sometimes these are framed up separately, but more often they are placed with butt edges closely together and framed as one. In some cases a slight



mould masks the join, and in some each piece is bevelled all round.

Early eighteenth century wall mirrors were often tall and very narrow, having moulded walnut frames with shaped heads. Sometimes a gilt shell accentuates the central lobe of the head; a gilt gesso moulding generally runs round near the glass.

There were made in the early years of the eighteenth century a number of simple hanging mirrors framed in walnut with the usual gilt inner moulding which are very like the glasses of toilet mirrors. Like them some are crested and some are not. They are rarely large in size, some are made with the largest dimension laterally, but most are panel-shaped with shaped top corners. They are very pretty for hanging in odd corners or above writing-tables.

Cheval glasses do appear to have been made in the early eighteenth century, but probably only a very few. It is possible that some which are now used in that way are adaptations of the large fire-screens in use in large houses at that date.

Towards the end of the walnut period mirrors were framed into the cupboard doors of two stage bureaux and other pieces of the same



kind. Corner cupboards and clothes presses were adorned in the same way, and mock windows were sometimes framed up out of looking glass to balance the actual windows on the opposite side of the room. By the end of the period comparatively large panels of glass had been achieved, so the method of joining pieces in vogue earlier had not to be resorted to to get the requisite size. Looking-glass however was still very expensive and those pieces panelled with it are generally fine ones.

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## CHAPTER X

### LONG CASE CLOCKS

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THE seventeenth century saw an enormous increase in the number of time-pieces of various sorts. Before it closed even the moderately well-to-do man ceased to be dependent on the sun for calculating time, and was able to possess not only a watch which he could carry about but a steady-going clock by which his household and business affairs could be controlled.

Before this, of course, there were plenty of mechanical and other contrivances which to some extent answered the purpose, but they all had obvious disadvantages.

From a poetical point of view it is, of course, charming that a sundial should truthfully bear the motto: "I mark only the sunny hours,"

but when appointments had to be kept on a rainy day it was clearly inefficient, and the exact time had to be discovered by other means.

In many towns there were the public clocks to mark the passing of time by day, and Dogberry and his like called the hours by night; hour glasses of all sizes were a help, and even such ingenious contrivances as water clocks had their uses, though it seems as if these last must have been more trouble than they were worth. Portable watches had, of course, been made long before, but, though quite numerous, they appear to have been made principally for the very wealthy classes.

Ordinary domestic time-keepers may be said to begin for practical purposes with the seventeenth century (or perhaps rather before) when brass lantern clocks without cases came into use. They must have been a welcome invention, but they have many disadvantages. The mechanism soon becomes dirty, being exposed to dust and dirt, and they are seldom reliable as time-keepers; moreover with hardly an exception they only run thirty hours. Obviously something more dependable and practical was needed.

The introduction of the pendulum as a means of driving the wheels of domestic clocks supplied what was required.

It was probably first used in England for long clocks somewhere about 1660, exactly by whom it is not known—perhaps by “our famous Fromanteel” as Evelyn calls one of the leading makers of clocks at that time. But, whoever started the fashion it was one that came to stay, and for over a century the grandfather clock was made in greater numbers than any other form of domestic time-keeper.

Long-case clocks whenever made are very much alike. Of course a straight sided tall narrow body enclosing the pendulum is dictated by necessity, and so is practically invariable. This is mounted on a broader base generally finished with a plinth, and sometimes small bracket or ball feet are added which, however, in many cases are not original. The head which encloses the works is nearly invariably rectangular, and the dial opening is almost always flanked by a pillar on either side. The dial opening follows the shape of the dial, whether square or arched on top, and a round opening, which would appear to be the logical one, is very rare indeed. These matters are



## PLATE XVI

## STATE BEDSTEAD

A State bedstead of late seventeenth century date, from Boughton House, Northamptonshire.

When new its hangings of crimson Italian brocade with a floral pattern in gold thread and damask and rich gold fringes must have had a very stately appearance.

Its imposing height of fourteen feet is emphasised by the plumes in vases on the canopy. It is seven feet long and six wide.

Even this, magnificent as it is, is not so elaborate as a good many of the same period.

[V. AND A.]





the result of tradition, being handed on by trade usage, clockmaking being a very conservative craft, businesses often descending from father to son through several generations.

Within these limits, however, the variety is extraordinary, and it is very rare indeed to find two clocks which are identical in every particular.

The first long case clocks which were made in the early days after the Restoration of the Monarchy with few exceptions, ran for one day only. They followed their predecessors, the lantern clocks, in having but one hand, which indicated the hours. Intermediate minutes had to be judged, the half hours and quarters alone being indicated. These clocks were often of ebony or ebonized wood: they are shallower and slenderer in all their proportions than those of later date, and often have a carved and open-worked cresting on the head.

Single-handed clocks continued to be made occasionally until well into the eighteenth century, and even eight-day clocks sometimes have one hand only. In some cases an addition has been made to the mechanism of a one-hand clock to enable it to carry a minute hand as well.



It would serve no useful purpose for most of my readers if I were to describe the mechanism of old clocks. This side of the matter is a special study in itself, and it takes a practical man who thoroughly understands them to give a competent opinion on the works of early clocks.

Before buying a clock which purports to be by one of the great makers, an expert opinion should be obtained, as of course it makes a considerable difference in the value of a clock whether or no the actual works are still found in their original case. In fact some collectors in past times attached very little value to the cases, the mechanism being all they cared about. Such collectors would often have fine or uncommon works put into new cases, while continuing to call the clock a "Quare", "Tompion," or whatever maker the works were by.

I know one old clock-repairer who some ten years ago told me that in the fifty years in which he had specialised in repairing long-case clocks, he had put more than a hundred clocks which had come to him in walnut cases into what he described as "good solid mahogany". He took much pride in his doings.

"Walnut cased clocks," he said, "were almost always really good clocks, *far* too

good for veneer." Like so many of his era he held veneered furniture in the deepest contempt.

It is sad to think of the spoliation he wrought. Would that I could think he was the only vandal, but there were too many others like him!

Fine works, of course, always have their value, but divorced from their woodwork this is much reduced.

Most collectors of walnut will look on the matter from another angle and, provided the clock is an eight-day one, in good going condition, will concentrate on the artistic aspect of the case and dial.

Most probably the actual clock-maker had little to say as to the kind of case in which the works were ensconced. The buyer would almost certainly order the case to be in keeping with the rest of the furniture, even if it were not made by the same maker, and we find every kind of decoration in vogue during the walnut period used to embellish the cases of clocks. It will sometimes be found that clocks are decorated in a fashion which already was given up or at all events *démodé* at the time when they were made. This may be attributed to the fact that as clock-makers became more numerous

clocks became cheaper and more widely used, and it would, of course, be a likely thing for a clock to be decorated like the rest of the furniture purchased perhaps ten or fifteen years before. It is, therefore, not possible to date with exactness either the works or the case by the style of the decoration, but there is a general progression in the designs of the cases which differentiates the work of succeeding periods.

In dating a clock it must be remembered (as mentioned before) there is a possibility that the works may not be those which were originally intended for the case they now occupy. As long as the dial was the same size (and there were few variations from the standard dimensions at any given period) the works and cases were in almost all cases interchangeable, though it would be difficult to put works of another period—for instance of the late eighteenth century—into a case a hundred years earlier.

Such rearrangements are often made at the present day, and no doubt have been carried out often during the period since long-case clocks were first made.

As new inventions were made, in some cases, no doubt, the original works were “scrapped”,



and the latest improvements replaced those which were out of date and might be considered inefficient.

While for ordinary purposes the "furnishing" collector may probably not mind very much about such points, a clock in its original case has a higher pecuniary value than a transferred one, and a buyer should scrutinise the interior for signs of adaptation. Of course any alteration which is visible from the outside and deteriorates the appearance is another matter and would, as a rule, render the buying of such a clock inadvisable.

Other points which require especial scrutiny are bases and tops. Often a tall clock has been cut down to fit the dimensions of a low room. Either the base has been shortened or the woodwork which surmounts the head has been tampered with.

The clock which is being examined may be still in its shortened state, or either the plinth or top, or both of them may be replacements, either of these conditions of course being a serious blemish, which detracts from the value. It must, however, be remembered that the number of untouched walnut clocks now in existence is comparatively few, that a good clock is worth putting in order, and that a



certain amount of careful restoration has not been held to prohibit the acquisition of fine marquetry clocks even by Museums and advanced collectors.

The general sequence of clock cases is as follows :

The cases of the earliest clocks are, as a rule, between six feet and seven feet in height. They are often made of ebonised wood or of oak or deal veneered with ebony. Some also are veneered with a rather light-coloured walnut inlaid with lines of some still lighter wood, generally in oval-shaped panels. There is no difference between the outside and inside of these spaces, the grain running on behind the inlay as it were and continuing beyond it; the lines not being used, as they were later, to define an area of another kind of veneer, such as burr walnut against a plain ground or a panel of marquetry against an oystered or plain ground.

Knibb, the great clockmaker, made a fine clock for Sir Richard Legh, of Lyme Hall, Cheshire, in 1675. The case was of ebony with capitals to the columns of "carved gold" (no doubt gilt brass) and "gold pedestalls with figures of boys and cherubimes all brass gilt". The block of this clock was specially chosen

to go with his wife's "Cabinett," possibly of lacquer.

Another type of early case is, on the whole, plain in appearance, the trunk presenting a smooth surface of walnut veneer broken only by the half round moulding edging the pendulum doors and the pendulum window.

The heads of early clocks are often finished with a triangular pediment or a carved and pierced cresting. The columns on either side the dial are either plain or twisted, perhaps more often the latter, in which case they are turned in pairs so that one twists from right to left and the other in the reverse direction.

Walnut clocks began to predominate about 1675, and great care and attention was lavished on the cases, which were often most elaborate.

For some years after this date the columns in the head are twisted almost invariably, and elaborate inlays and strongly patterned veneers were in favour. Some of the more noteworthy of these clocks are magnificent objects, being veneered with oystered walnut or laburnum, and further adorned with inlaid designs, such as stars or floral patterns. Others have the cases entirely covered with elaborate marquetry patterns; different coloured woods, both natural

## PLATE XVII

## TABLES

- (1) This table of oak and pear-wood is an example of simple furniture based on the lines of the more richly ornamented examples. Though not actually constructed of walnut such pieces look better in the company of pieces made of that wood than in that of their oaken contemporaries built on traditional lines.

*Height* 2' 6". *Length* 3' 1½" *Depth* 2' 11⅛".

[V. AND A.]

- (2) Walnut Table. English, second half seventeenth century.

*Height* 2' 4¼". *Width* 3' 1½". *Depth* 2' 1½".

[V. AND A.]









and dyed, being used to give variety. Others are veneered with finely figured walnut as to the general surface but have beautiful marquetry in reserves, sometimes on a light ground such as sycamore and sometimes—rather more generally—on ebony.

Most of these late seventeenth century clocks are under seven feet in height, but those made towards its close sometimes have an ornamental addition on the top of the hood, which lends increased height and importance. It was probably felt that when the simpler clocks stood in the same room as the majestic State beds, they appeared dwarfed by comparison without some such addition, and the more imposing of these clocks are often eight or nine feet high. Side by side with these splendid and elaborate cases are found simple ones of walnut veneer, the main panel owing all its beauty to the fine grain of the "burr". I must say that, personally, these plainer clocks appear more dignified than those which have elaborate patterns covering the entire surface. They are perhaps, a trifle severe, especially if the panel is not broken by a pendulum window; but they are delightful to live with.

Clock cases, which do not lend themselves to such vigorous cleaning as table-tops and

bureau-slopes often seem to have the surface "lacker" (to use the seventeenth century term for varnish) rather dull and opaque. With care and attention such clocks, if stood in a strong light, lose all their dimness and the grain of the wood gradually shines through, becoming more and more beautiful as time goes on.

Hesitate long before deciding on any drastic measures with regard to dark and opaque surfaces, and while you are hesitating clean carefully with any good old-fashioned polish, and the gradual improvement will most probably convince you that it is unnecessary to do anything else. Do not be in a hurry, patience is needed, for much old walnut has been spoilt by hasty surface treatment which is almost always inadvisable and often disastrous.

Quite small clocks, in every way except size exactly like their larger brethren—or perhaps I should say husbands—were made during the William and Mary and Queen Anne periods and are known as "grandmother clocks". Be sure not to be misled by the wiles of a salesman who tries to pass off a cut-down grandfather as one of these miniature clocks. They are smaller in every dimension, not shorter alone.

Cases continued to be made in much the same way for some years after 1700, though much taller on the whole than the seventeenth century clocks, and also more massive looking. Quite at the beginning of the century or perhaps even a little before, the moulding under the hood just where it joins the body was made concave instead of rounded as it had been earlier.

The domes on the hoods became more and more elaborate, and pinnacle ornaments were very usual, they were either of gilt brass or turned wood.

Some people think of their clocks as if the case and works were all actually constructed in the same workshop under the eye of the head clock-maker. It is pretty certain that this was not so. There is no difference in technique between the cabinet work on these clocks and that in other pieces of furniture.

In some cases it is quite likely that purchasers bought works and cases separately. In others, no doubt, the clock-maker had in stock or knew he could obtain cases of different patterns to suit his customer. The works were the most prized and the most expensive part of the clock, and it was the name of the maker of the works which was engraved on the dial; the name of the maker of the case has been forgotten.



About 1710 a change came over the shape of the dial which necessitated a corresponding variation in the shape of the opening, or perhaps the reverse was the case and the fashion for arched tops to cupboard doors and such things led to its general (though not universal) adoption for the clock face also, and the shape of the dial was altered to fill in the arch.

Be that as it may, the opening was now heightened by the addition of a semi-circular arch, and an arched cornice was adopted; as a rule this was decorated with fretwork arabesques. Sometimes, however, the straight cornice was retained above the arched opening and spandrels were inserted on either side filling the space. These little pieces of fretwork—often backed with red paper or silk—are a pleasant contrast to the smooth surface of the walnut. Often they are the only ornament, as marquetry had practically gone out of date by 1720, and the flanking columns were smooth, the twisted turning gradually having gone out of fashion, ceasing finally somewhere about 1705.

The superstructures of the head pieces were very elaborate and high on many clocks of the early eighteenth century, but after about 1725 they decreased in importance.

The shaped top to the pendulum door did not come into fashion so early as the rounded door in the hood. It was usual about 1730.

Walnut cased clocks continued to be made until 1750 or thereabouts, but for about thirty years in the middle of the eighteenth century short "table clocks" or "bracket clocks," which had been made to some extent in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries coincidently with walnut long case clocks, came to the fore and almost superseded them.

The collector who is buying an old clock should study the dial with great care. Dials have often been altered, repaired or even entirely replaced and, needless to say, it is imperative that the dial should harmonise in style with the case. Those of walnut clocks should be entirely of brass and generally have an added silvered ring to carry the numerals.

The dials made for single hand clocks have, of course, no minute markings, but the half hour is indicated by a kind of fleur-de-lys between the hours and the quarters by divisions inside the hour circle. The corner ornaments are often engraved.

Later we get applied cast-brass corners, and after the introduction of minute hands the ring

outside the hours was marked off into sixty divisions. The design of the corner ornaments generally consists of simple "cherub" heads with somewhat fanciful wings and a few scrolls. The central portion is generally given a matted surface by impressing an infinite number of punch marks; the engraved scroll work sometimes used earlier is rare at the end of the seventeenth century.

By the end of the seventeenth century the corners had become very elaborate, but the cherub head motif persisted for a long time in different forms.

It was varied after about 1700 by two amorini upholding a crown. There were other patterns, but some variation of one of these was usual before the coming of the arched dial. The corner pieces thereafter most usually consist of a pseudo-classical head set among scroll work, and the spandrels in the arch also took a variety of forms—a dolphin and arabesques being the most usual.

The fingers, too, are of interest, but being obviously likely to be broken or restored, even in the best clocks, replacements do not really diminish the value much as long as the hour-hand is in keeping with the minute finger.



It will be seen that there are very many points to note when buying an old clock, and if any considerable sum is involved it is well not to be in too great a hurry over the purchase. If possible get an expert opinion on the works; if this is not available many clock makers in country towns, especially of the older generation, have a very respectable knowledge of this type of clock and will advise as to whether there have been alterations and replacements, though of course, they would not be able to give an opinion as to date or maker.

As to the case, it is obvious that a general knowledge of walnut furniture is of use in buying a clock of that wood. In addition try to see and study an undoubtedly-genuine example of the type to which your intended purchase belongs, in the flesh, if possible; if not, the excellent large scale photographs in some of the specialists' books on clocks are most useful. The purchase of a long-case clock is an important matter: it will always be there and you cannot help seeing it, so spare no trouble, if you have the time, in making certain that you are acquiring a friend whom you will love more and more as time passes.

If, on the other hand, it is one of those occasions which come to most collectors, when



you know you must make up your mind at once because the opportunity is "here to-day and gone to-morrow," I can give you no recipe which will act as a touchstone. Take your courage in both hands and if you really like the clock, and the price is right—buy it.

“ Only be sure that you do like it,  
And that takes pains to know.”

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## CHAPTER XI

### CHESTS OF DRAWERS

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FROM the point of view of the housewife—and indeed of all who, as our well-beloved Pepys has it, “like to have everything neat and handsome about them,” *the* domestic event of the seventeenth century must have been the popularisation of furniture with drawers in it.

Anyone who has suffered (as I once did, quartered in a strictly “period” bedroom of a Tudor house), from a total absence of such conveniences can well understand why the number of early pieces of this type is enormous. Walnut chests of drawers survive in large quantities, in almost every conceivable form. Bureaux, single chests, double chests, cabinet chests, looking-glasses on small chests, baby

chests, giant chests—they are infinite in variety of form and size, and their decoration ranges from quite simple veneer to the most elaborate marquetry, but, diversified as they are in size, ornament and form, they have one thing in common—that they are full of drawers.

Though drawers of some kind were known in the sixteenth century, I suppose it was the importation of lacquer cabinets which first fully enlightened English people to the advantages which this method of storage possessed over that of the old style box-chest, which, from time immemorial, had played such a large part in the household equipment of their ancestors. The till at one end of the chest had been a help in the safe-keeping of small treasures, and the “mule chests”, with their two drawers below, had advantages over the ordinary kind, but most of them were made, I think, subsequent to the coming of the chest of drawers.

When the chest of drawers was first made it was, I think, mainly used as a place of safe-keeping for papers, deeds and treasures of various kinds, such as artistic curios, gems, miniatures and other things of special value, but it cannot have been long before it passed into use for the storage of garments, and became part of the ordinary domestic equipment. Cer-

tainly the early chests of drawers are made with a degree of finish and ornament which proves them to have been intended for rooms where their beauty would be appreciated, such as the principal bedrooms, dressing-rooms or "cabinets", though probably they were not

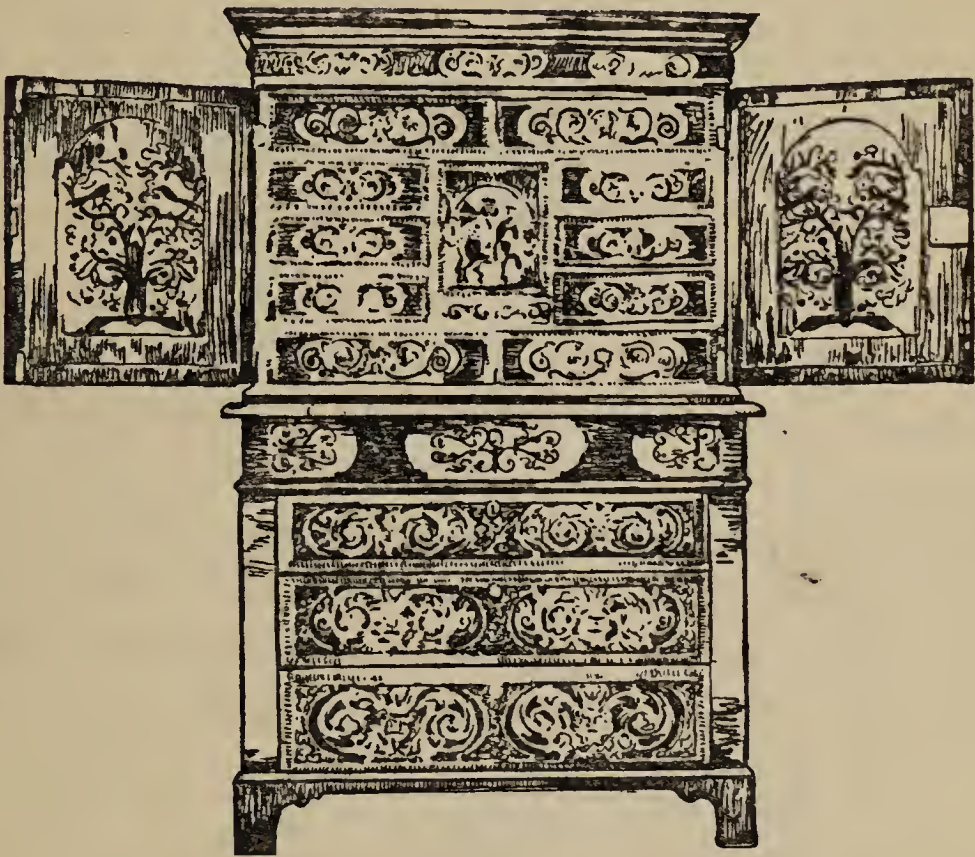


FIGURE 32.

WALNUT CABINET, 1688 (V. AND A.).

meant to be placed in the state reception rooms of palatial houses, where they would have been out of keeping with the rest of their surroundings. Fig. 32, representing a very fine cabinet, is especially interesting, as it bears a representation



## PLATE XVIII

## PEAR-WOOD TABLE

This circular table is an early example of a tripod stand, as it dates from the end of the seventeenth century. The feet recall the curves of the stands of chests of drawers and of chairs. It comes from Boughton House, where so many examples of late seventeenth century work are preserved. The table is not of the "tip-up" kind, but it is clearly the ancestor of the large number of tables of that sort.

[V. AND A.]





of a king, (presumably William III) on a horse held by a small negro servant, and the date 1688. The panels on the inside of the large doors showing cherry-stealing birds are well executed in natural wood.

It is of English workmanship; the lower part has probably been reconstructed. Height 5' 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", width 3' 8", depth 1' 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (V. and A.)

At the present day walnut chests of drawers of the plainer kinds can be bought more easily than any other kind of walnut furniture. Made in great numbers originally, they have, one would think, almost all survived. I, myself, have seven of various kinds, none of which has cost more than a few pounds—most of them, however, are rather plain, being simply veneered and edged with herring-boning; two, however, have inlaid lines, one is a Charles II chest which I bought for fifteen shillings with remnants of its original stand. It had stood for years in an outhouse until the stand collapsed and the chest stood on the fragments. Enough of the stand remained, however, for an accurate copy to be made, and the chest itself was in fair condition. The chest has an elm carcase and mouldings, but the fronts of the drawers are faced with very light walnut. The stand, except the stretchers, is a modern copy of the



original, which was reduced almost to tinder by worm and rot. The stand was of solid wood not veneered. The chest still retains all its original escutcheons, but the handles are replacements except two.

The old dealer I bought it from was a curious character. Whatever she bought, no matter what its value, she always put twenty per cent. on to what she had given, and sold it at that price. No bargaining was ever indulged in. Cheap or dear there it was—take it or leave it!

This chest she had bought for twenty-five shillings at an early stage in her career, and being unable to find a purchaser at her price it had been gradually pushed to the back of an old assortment of rubbish in an outhouse. When I came on it, the roof of the store had started leaking, and a general clearance was being made previous to repairs being undertaken, and the chest emerged.

I was more than willing to give the thirty shillings which had been its price some twenty-five years before. But no! She said with decision that half of it had gone so I must have it half price!

In case my readers may suspect me of robbing the widow and the fatherless by accepting her

offer, I may say that somehow she made a very good profit on the whole and died worth about fifteen thousand pounds.

Another plain chest was bought in two parts, the lower having been transferred for storage to a lumber-room as the effect of the base was considered unsuitable to a bedroom. This has all the original pear-drop handles and brasses—an unusual circumstance, as they often pull out and are replaced by others of later character.

These chests are still to be bought below the price of reproductions, and at recent country auctions I have seen, within the last two years, a nice chest inlaid with lines go for seven pounds, and a quite simple chest on a stand with three drawers and pad feet go for fifteen pounds. This was bought by a dealer who, I believe, subsequently sold it for forty.

The most characteristic of all walnut chests of drawers are the very fine pieces known as cabinet chests. These are in two parts, the upper of which opens with cupboard doors disclosing a range of variously-sized small drawers and sometimes pigeon holes, which, as a rule, are grouped round a centre cupboard.

The cornice, which has a half-round moulding, pulls out as a drawer.

The top section is of nearly the same depth from front to back as the lower part, and somewhat narrower from side to side, it drops into a rebate formed by a moulding on the top of the bottom section.

The lower part, which is the chest of drawers proper, contains as a rule three tiers of drawers, two smaller ones on the top row and two others, the longer being at the bottom. In the seventeenth century the original feet were almost always crushed balls.

These very handsome pieces were made up to about 1700 when they seem to have gone out of vogue. The small drawers on the top part were certainly rather difficult of access, but on the other hand the arrangement lent itself to the orderly storage and sorting of numerous deeds and papers, the drawback being that, in the case of the upper drawers, a step-ladder had to be used or the drawer entirely taken out before its contents could be examined. There is a great deal to be said for the cupboard doors, which shut all the contents safely away with one turn of the key.

Such cabinet chests were decorated in all the styles in vogue during the period in which they were made. Those with fine marquetry surface are magnificent pieces, being among the finest



looking of all the furniture thus decorated and, of course, are beyond the means of most of those who read this book. Those covered with ordinary veneer, especially if the varnish is in blurred condition, are not such striking pieces, and I know of a lady (thrice happy she!) who was approached by her gardener with the news that at a sale to take place shortly there was a cupboard he should much like for his potting shed, as it had plenty of small drawers for seeds and labels. He was accordingly told off to buy it, being given four pounds for the purpose. He returned thirty shillings change and the cupboard was put in the shed where it served its purpose for a considerable time before its owner chanced to go in. She found herself the surprised but delighted owner of a really lovely veneered cabinet chest complete with original handles. It was very little damaged, and now is the chief treasure of her drawing-room. The gardener, however, is gloomy, as he says he never had such a splendid place for keeping things in!

Such a chance, however, only comes to the extremely lucky and, possibly to them but once in a lifetime.

There are some curious chests of drawers which cannot be exactly classified under any



heading, differing in some way from all others like Fig. 33, which has a somewhat unusual stand. It is veneered with *lignum vitæ* on a carcase of oak and pine.

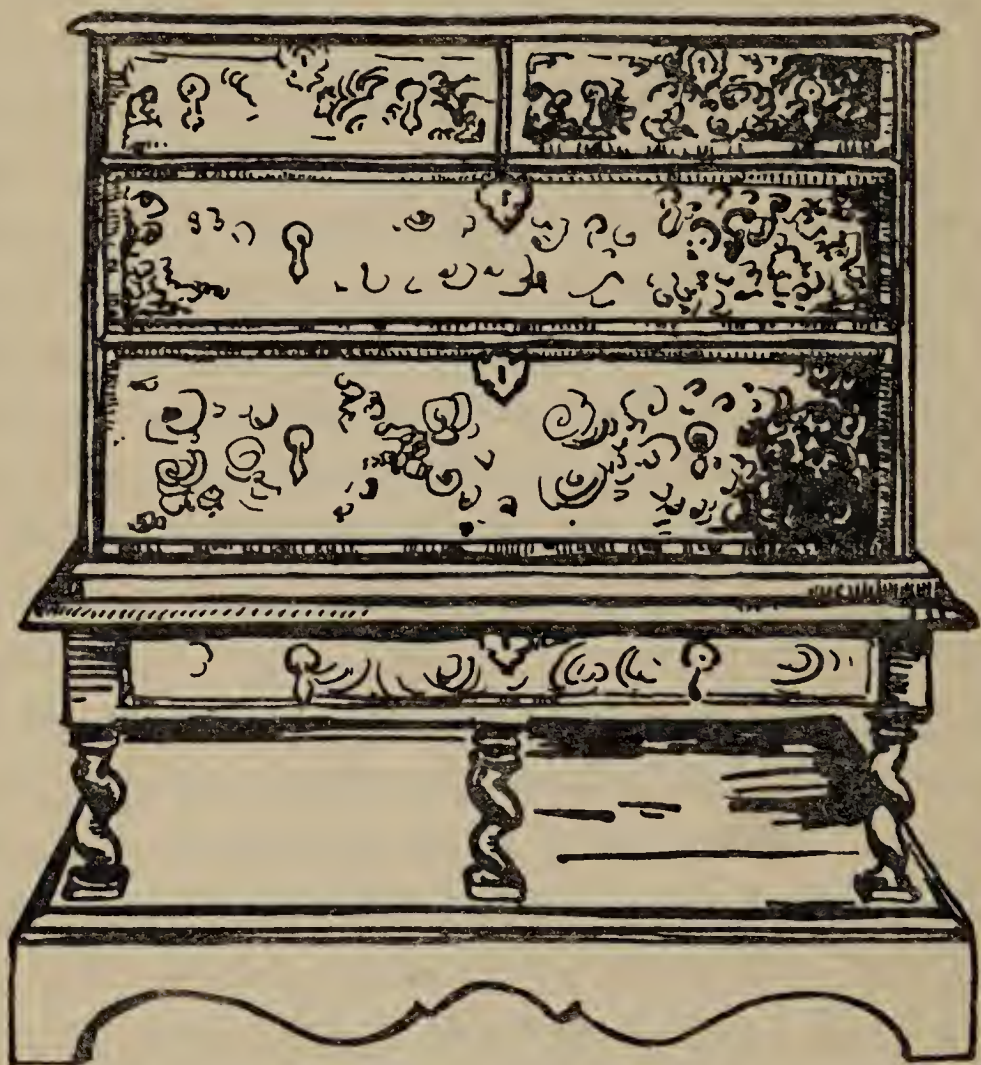


FIGURE 33.

CHEST ON STAND (V. AND A.).

Height 3' 8", width 3' 4½", depth 2' ⅝". (V. & A.)

The ordinary chest of drawers settled almost at once into the shape which has continued to

be made throughout the two hundred and fifty years and more which have elapsed since it was first fashioned.

The usual arrangement of the drawers was the same then as now, that is to say two short ones at the top and three long ones below, increasing in depth towards the bottom, sometimes there were three drawers at the top, but the top three drawers were more usual in the upper section of a double chest or on a chest on a stand, than in a short chest, and in buying a chest of drawers with three top drawers this should be borne in mind, as in many cases the top part of a double chest has been converted into an independent piece of furniture. The top of such a piece will no doubt be a reproduction and the plinth and feet also.

Double chests are sometimes quite early pieces, following the lines of the cabinet chests but minus the doors, and having a long drawer in the frieze, but during the very early part of the eighteenth century they were not numerous. Later in the Walnut period they were again made in considerable numbers. Some of them are very like the early mahogany double chests with which no doubt they are contemporary, having canted corners and curved bracket feet. I have a late chest of drawers in walnut, c 1750,

## PLATE XIX

## QUEEN ANNE DRESSING TABLES

These two small tables are typical of the small dressing or writing-tables which must have been made in thousands in Queen Anne's time. They stand about 2' 6" high and are about 1' 9" in depth.

The shaped "curtain" of the underframing is a very characteristic point about these admirable little pieces.

Messrs. Phillips, Ltd., Hitchin.









with a cupboard on the top. It is inlaid with light lines, and the frieze has a dentil moulding running round it.

Chests on stands are charming pieces, and though not really uncommon are not as often found in their original state as some dealers' catalogues would lead one to suppose. In very many cases the stand has perished either in the course of wear and tear, the legs proving too slight for the strain put on them, or because the owner found the top drawers hard to reach and preferred the chest to stand on the floor.

I know of a beautiful "chest on stand" which exists pathetically to-day in the guise of a dressing table and washstand, the original ball feet having been fixed under the top part, and much higher ones and a marble top have transmogrified the base into the guise of a washstand.

In a great many cases it will be noted that an item is described as a "genuine antique walnut case of drawers on a six-legged stand." This description is correct *verbally*. The chest being old and the stand having six legs—but in many cases it is so worded to lead the purchaser to think that chest *and* stand are old. Many of these modern stands have no drawers in them, they are often made from a very good design

and well constructed, though often rather too narrow from side to side, the old ones generally project a good deal at the side.

In other cases the drawers and upper part of the stands are original, only the legs having disappeared from beneath the arches which occupy the space below the drawers. Such replacements are very difficult to detect if they are good copies, and it is as well to have a guarantee that the chest, besides being antique itself, is "on its original stand".

The earlier stands to marquetry chests had sometimes turned legs either twisted or columnar and a single straight drawer in the frieze. This drawer was always decorated in exactly similar style to the chest above it. The difficulty of satisfactorily duplicating the decoration has often proved a snare to those reproducing stands. They in many cases cut the Gordian knot by omitting the drawer and planting the chests directly above the legs with a surround of suitable moulding. The effect is never quite satisfactory. A frieze a few inches wide without a drawer in it or with a small drawer in the centre was sometimes found in genuine rather early chests on stands, but though these are uncommon, they do occur, so that the absence of a drawer does not necessarily prove

that a stand is a reproduction, it is merely one of those bits of circumstantial evidence which if corroborated by many others, lead one to be very suspicious of a piece. As a rule flat stretchers of the serpentine kind which go with scroll supports were veneered, and here too reproductions sometimes go wrong.

During the reign of William and Mary the legs of stands were often turned. They were often five in number and were connected by gracefully curved stretchers, which are generally flat, the largest plane surface being horizontal. The feet, which are round in section either ball, crushed ball or onion-shape, being dowelled through the stretcher on to the leg. These legs are often somewhat fragile, and the habit which domestic servants have of pushing the whole contrivance about by the top is apt to strain them. Metal invisible castors, such as "Domes of Silence" do not detract from the appearance of the piece—they do not show—but have an excellent effect in lessening the strain.

Simple cabriole legs with stub or pad feet came into vogue about 1700. The stands with these legs are generally fitted with three drawers in similar fashion to the dressing-tables of the period, the two outer ones being deeper than the



centre drawer which is both wider and shallower, as a rule.

The bottom line of the carcass is not cut straight across but the front overhangs in a kind of curtain or valance, being in most cases cut into the scrolled or twisted outline which was fashionable at the time for so many purposes.

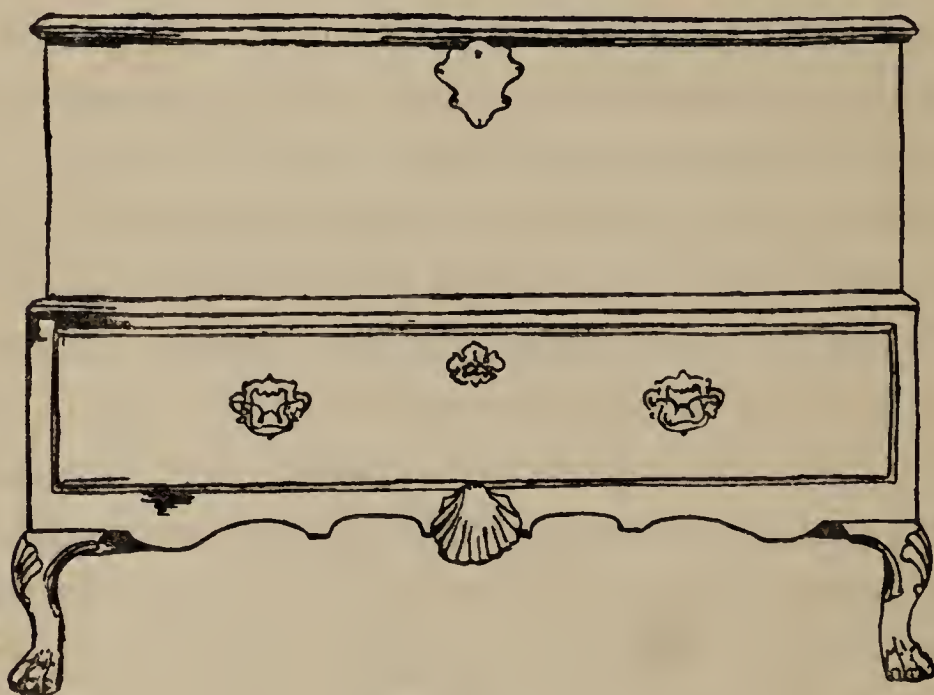


FIGURE 34.

WALNUT CHEST. EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (V. AND A.).

A very convenient piece of furniture which seems to be a late variant of the mule chest is shown in Fig. 34. It is uncommon, but there may be others ready to be found by searchers after something rather unusual to add to their treasures.

Very finely carved cabriole legs support the stands of some of the later chests. They are rather more thickset and sturdier than the earlier legs, it having probably been discovered that the longer ones were not really reliable if the chest were a very heavy one. The legs are a little more bowed outwards and the in and out curve more emphasised. They are cut out of a larger bulk of timber than the more upright legs and the carving of the claw and ball shows the work of a master hand.

Besides the highboy chest on stands there were also made curious hybrid pieces in which the stand, which consists of a shallow carcase with one drawer in it, is raised only a few inches from the ground by elongated onion feet. I have such a chest and must confess to not being very fond of it. The effect is too heavy and squat. The feet are not replacements of cabriole or other legs, an idea which has more than once been suggested to me. In the first place the top is well veneered, and if it were another foot higher this would be wasted, moreover one of the feet came off and the repairer assures me that there is no sign of any point of attachment other than the single dowel, so I suppose that these squat pieces had their advantages for some special positions.

There are other varieties of chests of drawers which may, when met with, be assigned to their proper classification by comparing them with the illustrations here given and studying them in the light of the details given in Chapter 1.

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## CHAPTER XII

### BUREAUX AND ESCRITOIRES

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**T**HE contrivances for writing at—or on—were of many kinds in the “Age of Walnut”. They are all very charming, and even at this present day it would be hard to devise a more convenient writing-desk for general use than one of these dating back some two hundred and fifty years.

They were of several kinds, each having its own particular merits, but all owning capacious storage and all having an ample space for writing on.

Among the earliest of them seems to be a kind of double chest of drawers or cabinet with a flap, which when shut encloses the upper part and when open affords a very large writing surface. Above this flap there is a large moulding forming the front of a drawer.



The top part is fitted with an endless number of small drawers grouped round a central small cupboard. There are contrivances for the compact storage of papers and account books in some of these escritaires, but I think that quite the earliest have only drawers and a central cupboard.

They seem to have been inspired by an Oriental cabinet set on a chest of drawers. They are extraordinarily convenient pieces of furniture, and why they ceased to be made I cannot imagine, unless it was found that the depth of the drawers in the upper part made papers apt to stray to the back, where they were somewhat inaccessible.

There were also made fairly early in the walnut period double chests with a pull-out drawer in the lower part for writing at, the top with its drawers and cupboards being enclosed with doors.

The sloping topped bureaux were made in endless variety. The most usual is the ordinary one which has two long drawers and two short drawers in addition to a well to which access can be gained only on opening the slope for writing. There is then seen a sliding cover which, when pushed back under the pigeon-holes, discloses a cavity

which is quite useful for the storage of things which it is desired to keep safe from prying eyes.

There is almost always a small central cupboard, sometimes flanked by two columns which form the fronts of two deep narrow drawers. There are at the back a row of pigeon-holes sometimes topped by "curtains" which form the fronts of drawers, below the pigeon-holes are one or two tiers of drawers which are almost invariably arranged so that the outer ones project beyond those nearest to the central cupboard. The fronts of the drawers are generally shaped out of a solid piece of wood so as to present a concave surface which is, of course, veneered. There are small brass knobs to pull them out by.

The exact arrangement of the drawers varies in each bureau, but they all have a certain general likeness, and the better ones have a multitude of "secret" drawers inserted in all sorts of recesses. I have one which possesses eight, besides the well, which is so nearly an invariable feature that it can hardly be called a "secret" drawer. In my own bureau the whole centre block of pigeon-holes pulls out on pressing a wooden spring in the roof of the middle cupboard. Access is thus obtained to a nest of

## PLATE XX

## FOLDING TABLE

A round folding walnut table of the type which intervened between the gate-leg table proper and the swing-leg card-table which prevailed during the eighteenth century and after. It has feet which resemble hoofs below the stretchers, instead of the "onion" feet which are more usual with legs of this type. The stretchers are flat and of solid walnut.

It dates from the late seventeenth century.

*Height 2' 3". Width 2' 8½". Depth 2' 5".*

[V. AND A.]









drawers which pull out sideways from behind the outside pigeon-holes.

As time went on the "well" was abandoned, and secret drawers became fewer, probably because locks were cheaper and it was easy to provide safer storage for private papers and valuables.

I have seen one in which the slides which draw out to support the writing board contain extremely small, narrow receptacles which only open when drawn out to their fullest extent, a long strip of wood lifts up as a lid, pivoting on a pin situated near the front. This could only have been used for papers or perhaps coins, as the whole thing was little more than an inch wide.

It is a very interesting amusement to overhaul a new acquisition in search of such hiding places, and any space which, on careful measurement, is not accounted for by the obvious drawers and pigeon-holes should be carefully examined, as it will, in an early bureau, almost certainly be found to contain some hiding-place.

Sloping-top bureaux sometimes have only one tier of drawers and are mounted on legs, but they are far less usual than those on a solid block of drawers.

Some sloping bureaux have a second stage opening with cupboard doors, but only in a few

cases are these tops fitted with ordinary plain cupboard or book shelves. Most of them have very elaborate fittings of pigeon-holes, racks for account books, and drawers all grouped round a central small cupboard which opens generally with one leaf but sometimes has two small leaves.

The outside cupboard doors take various forms, but most usually perhaps are round-headed, with an overhanging curved cornice. These doors are generally fitted with looking-glass. There are often two pieces of glass in each door as the large sheets of glass if in one piece were extremely expensive.

This glass, if original, is generally edged by a very shallow bevel, the glass being quite thin. Where a glass has been broken, it may have been replaced with modern plate-glass as glass with the old shallow bevel is difficult to obtain through the usual channels. The old bevel is so slight that with closed eyes it is difficult to ascertain where it begins when the finger is passed over it, while ordinary bevelled plate glass has a sudden almost sharp angle. These looking-glass doors are often engraved with stars or other devices in the upper part of the panel.

Some of these bureaux in two stages are

marvels of the cabinet maker's art, the finish of the whole being exquisite.

I have an upper part—alas that it is an upper part only, being divorced from its base—of which the whole of the inside is veneered with the same fine grained walnut as the outside. The tops are finished in many different ways—hooded cornices, straight cornices and broken pediments are all found, and gilt ornaments, such as vases and balls, are used to add dignity to some of the more important pieces.

Some very elaborate pieces of furniture of this kind were made by Samuel Bennett.

Knee-hole writing desks of varying sizes were also made in every degree of elaboration. They differ extraordinarily little from the kneehole desk of to-day in the arrangement of their drawers.

They are most usually veneered on the top, being often inlaid, and almost always have a cupboard at the back of the knee-hole, filling up about half the depth. Long-legged people do not always find them very comfortable for writing at. It is a moot point whether a good many of these knee-hole tables—if not all—were not originally intended as dressing-tables. They are not often fitted with any kind of pigeon-holes or secret hiding places, and they



certainly would make most excellent toilet-tables.

There is also another pattern of knee-hole exemplified by the well-known seaweed marquetry bureau formerly in the collection of Sir George Donaldson, which opens back somewhat in the way of a harpsichord, only instead of showing notes, there are pigeon-holes and drawers.

The different shapes of bureaux overlap each other in point of time, and no date can be given exactly for the beginning or end of any shape, but it may be taken that the fall front cabinet bureau is an earlier type, the introduction of the knee-hole desks and slope top bureaux following later. The slope top proved itself the favourite type, and persisted throughout the walnut period and beyond it, having continued to be made in one form or another until the present day.

Many of the bureaux in two stages are fitted with candle slides; these are narrowish pieces of wood which pull out by means of small brass knobs from below the upper part, and are very convenient for standing a candle upon to give light while writing at the bureau.

The sloping tops of some bureaux have a narrow beading or ledge fixed on to them to

serve as a book-rest or perhaps as a music desk when one of the informal concerts, in which the people of the late century took such delight, was being indulged in.

There are also some very delightful little writing cabinets which resemble their larger brethren in general arrangement of pigeon-holes and drawers. They have a sloping lid and several small drawers in one or two tiers below it. Some of these miniature pieces were originally intended as bases to looking-glasses and close inspection will reveal the places where the uprights were fixed into the top, they having been broken off or removed. Many of them however, were made as we now see them. Perhaps the numerous little drawers were in most cases meant for the storage of all kinds of small treasures, rather than for any writing more serious than the poetical epistles which Milla-met's waiting lady found made her mistress' curls "so pure and so crips".

Those that are complete in themselves usually have a higher pecuniary value than those which exactly resemble them, but have been shorn of a glass, like that shown on the top of the knee-hole table in Plate xxviii.

The decoration of bureaux, of course, follows the general course of other furniture and they

are always veneered. A large proportion of the early cabinet bureaux with fall fronts are decorated with fine marquetry, and the expanse of the outside of the fall front, unbroken in any way, must have encouraged the workman to do his very best. The general arrangement is an oval panel of floral marquetry surrounded by self-coloured walnut veneer, either burr or finely figured or oyster pieces, or entirely covered with floral marquetry, like that shown in Plate XXVII.

Some of them are entirely covered with walnut veneer or oystering without any floral pattern—a very few have simple line patterns. Whatever style of ornament on the flap is followed, it is also carried out on the drawers on a smaller scale, so making the effect a harmonious one.

These fall front bureaux were made over a period of perhaps twenty-five years, the wonder being why they ever went out of fashion.

The general arrangement, and even the proportion, of these cabinet-bureaux differs very little throughout the period when they were made; but minor details change with the passage of time; among them the change of fashion in the style of the feet is noticeable. They are in early ones of the ball or onion kind, but a few of the latest are of the bracket type. In some cases



modern bracket feet replace the original balls. Where this has been done it is often possible, by the aid of a small mirror and an electric torch, to see the traces of the alteration having been made in the corners where the earlier balls were fixed.

Comparatively few of the knee-hole desks have ball feet, most of them having brackets, which are obviously original.

The details of sloping top bureaux follow exactly those of the contemporary chests of drawers, and reference should be made to the chapter dealing with these pieces of furniture for descriptions of the mouldings and so on, which afford information as to their place in the series.



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## CHAPTER XIII

### BRASSES

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**I**F the brass work of walnut furniture is original it is to some extent a guide as to the date at which the piece was made.

It is, however, comparatively rare for the handles to have survived intact, and in a great many cases they have been renewed, not once only, but several times, as can be seen by the holes which have been made for the various sized and spaced bolts at different periods.

In many cases, however, there are indications inside the drawers which show what was the type originally used, and often when the pulls have been renewed the first keyhole escutcheons remain, giving a clue to the original type of brass work.

The metal work on walnut furniture is generally confined to the locks, drawer pulls and escutcheons on drawer furniture, and hinges, internal catches and keyplates for cupboard furniture. Clock cases have hinges, a lock and keyplates, and the ornamental brass work of the head which is often quite elaborate.

The earliest kind of drawer-pull is the well-known "pear-drop". It is made in several



FIGURE 35.

PEARDROP HANDLE, SOLID PULL, CHARLES II.

patterns, none of them very large, and it always seems rather inadequate for the larger drawers of some of the bigger chests of drawers. I have one such with the bottom drawer three feet long by eighteen inches deep, which still possesses its original small pear-drops with original wires.

## PLATE XXI

## CABINETS

- (1) This Cabinet top is of early eighteenth century workmanship. In construction and general arrangement, and even such details as the brass bolts, it follows the style of earlier work. The style of the marquetry, which consists of a scroll-work design of holly on a walnut ground, is the latest type of English marquetry.

Period of Queen Anne. *Height* 2' 6". *Length* 3'.  
*Width* 18".

- (2) This Cabinet of English workmanship dates from the second half of the seventeenth century. It is painted with floral and other designs, including birds and arabesques.

*Height* 1' 4". *Width* 1' 11". *Depth* 1'.

[V. AND A.]





1



2





The wire which fastens these small pulls in position passes through a small rosette into the drawer. In many cases this takes the shape of a kind of Tudor rose, and it is steadied in position by a handmade nail or pin. (Fig. 35.) The most ordinary kind of escutcheon is rather large in comparison with the pull. It generally is an irregular oval in shape with cast decoration of vague acanthus-like leaves, the key-hole being pierced in a smooth, raised field in the central part.

Another type of pull, much like the pear-drop, but differing somewhat in shape, is flatter and wider laterally, resembling a scroll, and having a star-shaped rosette at the back. It is more elaborate than the pear-drop, but there does not seem much ground for considering it was used only for better pieces.

There were also rather ornate escutcheons with the supporters of the Royal Arms on either side the keyhole. Some people like to think that pieces with such brasses were made for the King or the Royal residences, but I do not think it any more probable than that all chairs bearing a crown were made for one of the Royal Palaces. In both cases they are probably originally merely manifestations of exuberant loyalty coupled with lack of

inventiveness, and once the models had been made the pattern remained in use for a considerable time.

Small drawers inside cabinets and such pieces had pear-drop handles of the same type as the outside ones. The locks are of brass, fitted by means of hand-made nails where they remain exactly as originally fixed.

Floral marquetry furniture, and the plain veneered furniture which is its contemporary, should have these brasses. In many cases there is a special reserve left in the designs where it is obvious that the pull was intended to be fixed. In others there is no special place indicated, and the cabinet maker has placed his brass just where it seemed best to him to do so, while in others there is an obviously indicated place for the pull, which, however, has been put elsewhere with a somewhat brutal disregard for the design.

Keyhole escutcheons generally break the line of the decoration even when original, as they never appear to have entered the designer's calculations.

The pulls of most patterns have a small stirrup-shaped loop at the top. A loop of stout wire or strip brass was passed through this to the back, where it was spread out and hammered

flat against the wood. Naturally in many cases this rather frail fastening has given way, and sometimes it has been replaced by a strip of metal with holes for two small screws, which is rather a good plan.

In other cases one of the reproduction pear-drops with screw and bolt has been substituted. Too often the one original hole has been plugged and others bored to take double bolts and nuts for bail handles.

Succeeding the pear-drop handles came the bail pulls, and some early examples, of which but few remain, are made of bent stout wire looped to the inside of the drawer at each end with strip brass or wire after the manner of pear-drop pulls. In most cases, however, these frail pulls have vanished, and screws and nuts and cast bails have been substituted, the original plates being retained in some cases.

The back plates of the end of the seventeenth century have an irregular outline which has caused them to be called by some people "butterfly brasses," as there is a remote resemblance to such an insect with extended wings, the body being very ponderous and the wing somewhat exiguous. The brass is rather thick and the earliest type of these plates has a pattern impressed by means of stamps; the



design is not marked by a single impression from a die, but built up by different punches in such a way that each plate differs a trifle from the



FIGURE 36.

ESCUTCHEON, *c.* 1700.

others. The plates are attached by means of brass, round-headed nails or pins. There are generally escutcheons very similar in both



FIGURE 37.

ESCUTCHEON FROM QUEEN ANNE BUREAU.

decoration and shape, only smaller and, of course, without the pulls. (Figs. 36, 37 and 38.)

In the case of small drawers the design is generally a little modified to allow of the one plate serving as back plate as well as keyhole escutcheon.



FIGURE 38.

ESCUTCHEON, *c.* 1715.

The next plates were much like these, but with a more elaborately curved edge and greater height and depth in the middle.



FIGURE 39.

BAIL HANDLE. EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

After a time the impressed pattern was omitted and the back plates consisted of smooth

metal redeemed from plainness by the elaborate curves of the outline. (Fig. 39.)



FIGURE 40.

ESCUTCHEON FROM CLOCK CASE. EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

The escutcheons were of similar decoration, only rather smaller. There were some narrow



FIGURE 41.

HANDLE OF DRESSING TABLE, *c.* 1715.

lock plates to match for the small spaces between the glass and the edge of the doors on cup-

boards and on the tops of bureaux, also on clock cases. (Fig. 40). On the inside drawers of bureaux and looking-glasses there were small brass knobs.

For a short time there appears to have been a vogue for brasses which consisted of just a rim of metal connecting the ends of the handles (Fig. 41), and, at the end of the walnut period, the most usual type consists of fretted patterns



FIGURE 42.

EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY HANDLE.

which are often extremely elaborate and rather large. (Fig. 42). There may be three varieties of these fretted plates on one piece, the pattern being modified to include a keyhole for the small drawers, and being carried out in a smaller size for the escutcheon plates without pulls for the locks of the big drawers. Even a quite plain piece of furniture becomes decorative by the aid of these handsome brasses which,



## PLATE XXII

## CLOCKS

- (1) Clock by Henry Simcock, of Daintree, in a black painted case. It is dated 1714.
- (2) Clock in fine marquetry case early eighteenth century.

*Height 8' 3½".*

[V. AND A.]



I



2



though used on walnut, did not I think, come into use until that wood was beginning to be superseded by mahogany. They are extremely suitable to "liven up" the rather sombre effect of the early mahogany used during the transition period, which had so little marked grain to diversify its surface.



FIGURE 43.

LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ESCUTCHEON.

Accompanying these brasses were charming tiny handles for the quite small drawers of looking-glasses, bureaux and the like, in place of the small knobs used earlier. They are built up of three curves, two concave and one convex, and continued in use for many years—until the beginning of the nineteenth century. (Fig. 44.)



The brass furniture was generally well thought out in its relation to the decoration and proportion of the piece. There were often reversions to a former type, and modifications of the type in vogue, but it will generally be found that there is some good reason for the departure from the usual patterns of the time. In the pattern books of metal work issued at the very end of the eighteenth century there are drawings of the patterns introduced fifty years earlier.



FIGURE 44.

EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY LOOP HANDLE.

Sometimes, of course, one buys a piece which has brasses which are old but of the wrong kind for the style of the woodwork, being perhaps replacements of fifty years after the date when it was made. It is generally a wise proceeding to replace these with good reproductions of the originals. The holes of the first set of screws can generally be seen and often a faint outline where the edge of the metal has bitten

into the wood as well. In every case it is a good idea to try the effect of brasses similar to those originally used, which may change a piece, which is only "so so", into a real joy.

Hinges are of various kinds. On early china cupboards one sometimes sees curious ornamental fluted or scalloped brasses shaped like a button mushroom, applied on the outside to cover the fastenings of the hinge, which would otherwise appear on the outside.

There are early ornamental strap hinges on the insides of the cupboard doors enclosing the nests of drawers and cupboards which form the top stages of cabinet bureaux and other pieces of a similar kind. These hinges are generally expanded at the end into a kind of foliation.

For small cupboards there are sometimes very pretty narrow pierced hinges, either plain or impressed with a small pattern. These hinges have often proved insufficiently strong to sustain the weight of the door, and additional hinges have had to be added later to supplement them.

After the beginning of the eighteenth century cupboard hinges ceased to be ornamental.

The catches for cabinet cupboards which bolted the second leaf of the door are often quite

elaborate and prettily worked. They would, of course, show when the doors were open, and the interiors of the bureau cupboards were often as well finished and as finely decorated as the outside.

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## CHAPTER XIV

### THE PRESERVATION AND REPAIR OF WALNUT FURNITURE

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**I**T is extraordinary in how many cases walnut furniture has come down to us in a very good state of preservation. It appears as though the makers, though they were often working in a more or less experimental fashion, knew in many ways more than the workers of the present day.

At all events they executed their work in a more thorough fashion than is usual in our era. No doubt they gave more time and attention to minor details of both construction and finish than is possible nowadays, when furniture often passes through two or three hands, each expecting to make more profit than falls to the lot of the actual maker.



If the surface of a new acquisition is in good condition nothing should be done to it beyond keeping it clean and well polished. A useful home-made mixture consists of equal quantities of raw linseed oil, methylated spirits and vinegar thoroughly well shaken together to form a kind of emulsion (which however soon returns to its constituent parts). This will be found to clean as well as polish, if a few drops are sprinkled on a piece of stockinette (which should be renewed when dirty). A good proprietary make of furniture polish can be used subsequently to the first few occasions, unless the old-fashioned household polish—beeswax and turpentine—used with plenty of elbow grease, is favoured, but the wax must be applied lightly and the elbow grease plentifully, or a streaky tarnished surface will result. This is more noticeable on walnut than on either oak or mahogany, owing, I think, to most walnut furniture having been originally finished with varnish, any wax, therefore, that is left on does not thoroughly amalgamate with the surface but remains as a dull misty coating. The polish should really be looked on as a lubricant to prevent the rubbing removing the surface of the old polish or patina.

Where the surface is not good the owner

must deal with each vital problem on its merits. Even very dull, blurred, and scratched surfaces revive in a wonderful way if treated as advised above, and I most strongly advocate that the above simple domestic treatment should be persisted in for a considerable time before any drastic measures are decided on. If the piece is put where direct sunlight falls on it, the grain will often appear in the most wonderful way as the varnish clears. If, however, it has been decided that simple treatment is of no avail, the best course is to put the piece, if it is at all a valuable one, into the hands of experts for proper surface restoration. But *please* let it be ascertained that they really are experts in old walnut furniture, and will not, as most cabinet makers would do, simply strip the old polish or its remains off and give it a hard bright surface of French polish, which would spell ruination not only to the artistic effect but to the pecuniary value of the piece.

However, several of the firms which specialise in reproductions, also carry out resurfacing and other repairs in a very satisfactory way.

It is a safeguard against mistakes in treatment to have a written specification of the work which you wish put in hand before work is begun. As an example of what may occur if

## PLATE XXIII

## WALNUT CHEST OF DRAWERS

This beautiful chest of drawers of English workmanship is typical of the fine marquetry made in this country at the end of the seventeenth century. The columnar legs are a little unexpected, and it always appears to me curious that they should be in such very good state, together with the feet, while the stretcher is much worn. They may possibly be early replacements of others of different pattern.

*Height 4' 2½". Width 3' 5". Depth 1' 11½".*

[V. AND A.]









excess of zeal is not guarded against, an instance which happened lately may be cited. A walnut table had a circular mark made on it by a hot muffin dish and was sent to a well-known firm to have this mark removed. Of course, it only needed local treatment. The *whole table* was "cleaned off" and returned "looking like new." The only satisfaction obtainable (except by going to law) was a grudging statement that "no charge would be made."

Sometimes, however, one comes across a piece of no particular merit and in poor condition on which it does not seem worth while spending much money, but which it is desired to make usable and pleasant looking. In such a case the great point to remember is not to do anything which cannot be undone. At different times tastes change, and a piece which at the moment appears too plain, too heavy looking or otherwise not very attractive, may in a few years be admired for just the very qualities which at the moment are against it. So any amateurish repairs should aim at doing what is necessary for preservation and utility only, without destroying the character of the piece in any way.

If the veneer has been buckled and raised by damp, it may be made to lie flat by placing a

wet cloth on it and ironing over it with an ordinary domestic flat-iron until the cloth is dry and the iron cooling, when it may be left in position for a day until the veneer is firmly fixed in place.

Small bits of veneer off flat surfaces may be made to adhere by means of ordinary tube glue, but the old glue must first of all be carefully cleaned off. A help towards making a recalcitrant piece keep in place is to drive an ordinary fine sewing needle through it into the wood. The needle may then be broken off close to the surface and driven home by a tap with a hammer. It will be quite invisible.

Servants ought to be instructed always to put any piece of veneer, or small bits of broken mouldings and so on, into a drawer of the piece they came off, at once. It is good policy to praise them for doing this, rather than to chide them for doing the damage.

If paint has to be stripped off a walnut veneered piece, the outer coats may economically be removed by a chemical paint remover which, however, requires careful handling if damage is to be avoided, and the action must be stopped before it reaches the wood by the use of vinegar. It is best to proceed cautiously,

using the cleaner sparsely in two or more applications rather than to risk removing more of the paint than is wise. If the chemicals touch the wood they may bleach, burn, or otherwise damage the surface. Spirit or petrol is safer to get off the last skin, as it is most difficult to prevent the more powerful agents from destroying the nature of the wood. Of course the usual precautions as to working at a safe distance from a light must be observed when dealing with petrol. It is really wiser to work out of doors, and cigarette smoking friends must be kept at a safe distance, or a terrible disaster may result.

In the case of very much pieced veneer, such as burr walnut or oystering, it may be found that the paint has worked down into the cracks between the sections and, where a light colour has been used, it may be almost impossible to remove all traces of it. Dark-coloured mastic may, however, be worked into the cracks to cover it, and this is probably the substance which was used for the original filling of small cracks and shakes in the veneer itself. It is rare to find cracks of any size left between the actual pieces of veneer, so skilled were the workers in fitting them.



One is sometimes called on to decide as to the retention of brasses, where the originals have been removed and replaced at a later date. For instance, "pear-drops" may have been replaced some twenty or thirty years later with plates and bail handles. The question arises—is it wise to put reproduction pear-drops in place of these? The general character of the piece must be a guide as to the best course to pursue, but in most cases I should say that if the handles are of a kind used during the walnut period, it is well to let them remain, but if later, or if they are out of keeping with the style of the piece, it is better to remove them, replacing them with accurate reproductions of the original type, having the later holes carefully stopped. The keyhole escutcheons are very often the original ones, even if the handles are gone, and in this case are a useful guide in the choice of the latter. Original locks should be retained even if some trouble has to be undertaken in obtaining suitable keys.

Invisible steel castors driven into the feet of bureaux, chairs and tables certainly save them from much strain when in use.

Original leather castors are curious, but generally quite useless by now, still they should,

I think, be left *in situ* if possible, placing the chair where it will not be subjected to much pulling to and fro.

The rather fragile chair is something of a problem for the furnishing collector who wishes to make use of his belongings. The counsel of perfection is, of course, never to buy such a thing, but having become possessed of it the only course to take is to have it as carefully repaired as possible, and if it still is shaky, put it on a landing where it can be seen without being used. But please do not allow your stout friends to sit on it, and then either hurt their feelings by asking them to move, or hurt the chair by letting them continue to occupy it!

The worst problem, however, that the walnut collector has to face is his deadly enemy known shortly as "worm".

This horrible pest is so insidious and so destructive that scientists have spent much labour in the endeavour to find some simple means of exterminating it. The Board of Agriculture supply leaflets giving the results of their experiments, but though no doubt the "worm" would be killed by these methods, they might destroy the surface finish which is so very important a matter with regard to walnut.

If possible, furniture affected by this wretched creature should not be bought, but sometimes the piece may have been bought without the purchaser having any knowledge of its having been attacked. In other cases some special attraction as to price or design leads to the acquisition of a particular example and the consequences are risked.

But one thing however, is certain, that unless the creatures are killed and ousted, a collector will sooner or later sorely rue the day when such a piece, however charming, was admitted to his hearth and home. The pest will, under certain circumstances, spread with considerable rapidity, though in other cases it remains doing its deadly work in its original home without affecting the other furniture for a considerable time ; but like an unexploded bomb it is always a menace, and whenever the tiny tell-tale heaps of dust appear you may be sure that you are harbouring this insidious little sapper and miner.

Having found that the enemy is within your gates the task of routing him must be faced. Many remedies have been suggested and found satisfactory by those who have tried them with sufficient patience, such as injecting paraffin into each hole with a small syringe and blowing insect powder in with a bellows in the same way.



With a badly infested piece it must be an endless task. My own experience has been that nothing beats formalin fumigation. A local cabinet maker has, at my suggestion, installed a special fumigating cupboard of fairly large size in which, with a proper formalin fumigating lamp, the affected pieces are put. They are subjected to two separate fumigations, and strong ones at that if the piece appears badly infected.

I have had many pieces thus treated, including several very badly infested beech chairs, and in only one case has there been a return—it was a black painted elm bureau and one or two larvæ must have survived the ordeal. It had another fumigation, and since then no further signs have appeared. However, even this one case shows the necessity of keeping a watch on all pieces which may be open to suspicion. It is possible, of course, to do fumigating at home.

The lamps may be bought in different sizes according to the air space of the fumigating chamber. A large cupboard or small dressing-room should be prepared by pasting up all cracks with strips of newspaper, the window, if any, being of course carefully sealed round the sides and especially up the crack between the sashes.



## PLATE XXIV

## DOUBLE CHEST

This is a beautiful example of the double chests of drawers which were made in considerable numbers in the early part of the eighteenth century. It dates from about 1700. The curves which break the line at the bottom and the arch on the top are a particularly happy idea on the part of the designer, as these double chests often present a very dull rectangular appearance. It is altogether beautifully proportioned, the massive bracket feet giving a feeling of stability. The coved recess at the bottom is a feature also of some of the double chests which have a writing-desk in them. In such pieces it was of use to prevent the feet scratching the veneer. A sun and rays or a plain star was often inlaid.

*Height 6' 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Width 3' 6". Depth 1' 11".*

[V. AND A].







A place should be left clear for the lamp, so that there will be no chance of its overturning or setting fire to anything, and it should be charged in exact accordance with the directions given by the makers. When lit, and it is seen to be burning all right, the door should be closed and pasted up from the outside, not forgetting the keyhole and bottom of the door. The lamp will burn itself out fairly soon, but the atmosphere remains charged with the vapour for some time, so it is well to leave the door unopened for twenty-four hours. It should then be thrown open until the vapours have dispersed before entering to remove the furniture.

There are several makes of these disinfecting lamps on the market, and inquiry should be made from the manufacturers as to whether the kind selected is suitable for the purpose in view.

Infested furniture sometimes shows a great many worm holes, sometimes only a few. After the creatures have been slain the disfigurement may be considerably lessened if the holes are carefully filled with beeswax, darkened with a little pitch and hardened with a little rosin. The mixture may be melted in a small gluepot and tiny rolls made between the fingers and



forced into the holes. It is a tedious and messy job, but if the mixture is of the right colour it makes the holes hardly noticeable.

The parts of chairs which are not visible, linings to drawers and underwork of tables, are often made of soft woods such as beech or elm, which are an easy prey for worms. Repairers often want to replace them, and of course it may sometimes be advisable to do so, if they make the piece unsafe or shaky. As a rule they look considerably worse than they are. The worms seem to come to the surface a great deal more in beech than any other wood, so their ravages show more, and a piece with its surface literally peppered with holes may be far sounder at heart than a piece of walnut which shows few signs of trouble.

It is not much use, if the wood is really far gone, to attempt to help matters by screwing on metal plates. The spongy wood will not hold the screws and they soon draw, leaving a gap in the wood.

It will be seen that worm-ridden furniture is a somewhat troublesome possession, and should be avoided if possible. All pieces that have worm holes, however, have not necessarily worms in them, for some unknown reason they at times stop their ravages before any serious

harm has been done. When this is the case the holes will be found partly stopped up with dust and dirt, and none will show any traces of new wood, nor will light-coloured dust come out when the surface is tapped.

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## CHAPTER XV

### BUYING WALNUT FURNITURE

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**T**HIS chapter is written for the minor collector who hopes to obtain his purchases at a much smaller price than he would have to pay if he bought them from well known dealers of repute in large towns. For such a buyer to be successful in his quest, he must have knowledge of his quarry, time to seek it, a "seeing eye"—and a slice of luck. Thus equipped he may possibly discover what he is in search of or, what is perhaps more likely, something else that he likes ever so much better.

The buyer of old walnut furniture has in his favour the fact that even at the present day there is an amazing amount of ignorance among minor dealers and country auctioneers

about it. Though in some cases their lack of knowledge leads them to place astounding prices on Mid-Victorian atrocities, in most instances the advantage is quite the other way.

Gone, of course, are the days when an old furniture dealer, who had sent up an emissary to me with a message asking me to come and see an old bureau which she had just bought, met me with the information that she hadn't said it was of walnut as she was afraid I might not have come if she had, but she thought that if she could only get me to look at it that I should buy it.

She got to know my love of walnut after a time, and 'Erbert, her familiar, would appear with the information mysteriously imparted that "Missus has one of yours in now."

Thus most of my walnut was acquired twenty years ago in a country town. *Eheu fugaces!* Even then, however, Charles II chairs were known to all, and but seldom were bargains in them to be had, though oak was invariably preferred to walnut.

I missed two lovely chairs of this kind through a piece of sharp practice on the part of a dealer. They stood in the hall of a



country vicarage where I had known them all my life.

On the death of the vicar the furniture was to be sold and I at once thought of these chairs. On the view day I looked for them in vain, which surprised me, as I knew all the furniture had to be sold. I inquired of the daughter of the house what had become of them.

She said with great glee: "Oh, we had such luck over those chairs. A London dealer happened to be staying in the neighbourhood and hearing there was to be a sale he looked in about a week ago! He just happened to want two chairs like those to make up a set, and so was able to give us a good deal more for them than they were really worth. He couldn't stay for the sale, so he gave us five pounds for them and took them away with him."

I said something a little strong about that dealer, to which she replied: "Oh, but they weren't *oak!*"

They were not; they were exquisite walnut, wonderfully preserved and unrestored. I wonder what that dealer got for them. The sign over his shop should be "The Green Bay Tree."

Country vicarages often contain walnut. I saw recently a most exquisite small bureau in

two stages two feet two inches wide, with a mirror-fronted door, with original glass in it cut in a star pattern, which had been bought with the whole contents of a vicarage by a firm of house-furnishers, who sold it for twelve pounds, being ignorant of its value. It was "passed on" at a hundred and thirty pounds.

My own most exciting "find" was a marquetry mirror, which had been "lacquered" by an eighteenth century amateur somewhat clumsily in a vague gold pattern on a coarse black ground. On looking at it closely I thought I discerned among the cracks indications of a pattern and one or two depressions which might indicate a missing piece of inlay—or might not. As it stood it was a rather pleasing frame, but I decided to "put it to the test and win or lose it all"—and had a small part carefully stripped, when sure enough a flower appeared. Gradually the numerous super-imposed coatings were removed and the marquetry appeared in its original beauty.

A good William and Mary chair of the upholstered type, with walnut legs, I bought for three guineas (including carriage) from a dealer, at a Welsh watering-place in 1924, who remarked with a patronising air: "Whatever one might

## PLATE XXV

## WALNUT CHESTS OF DRAWERS

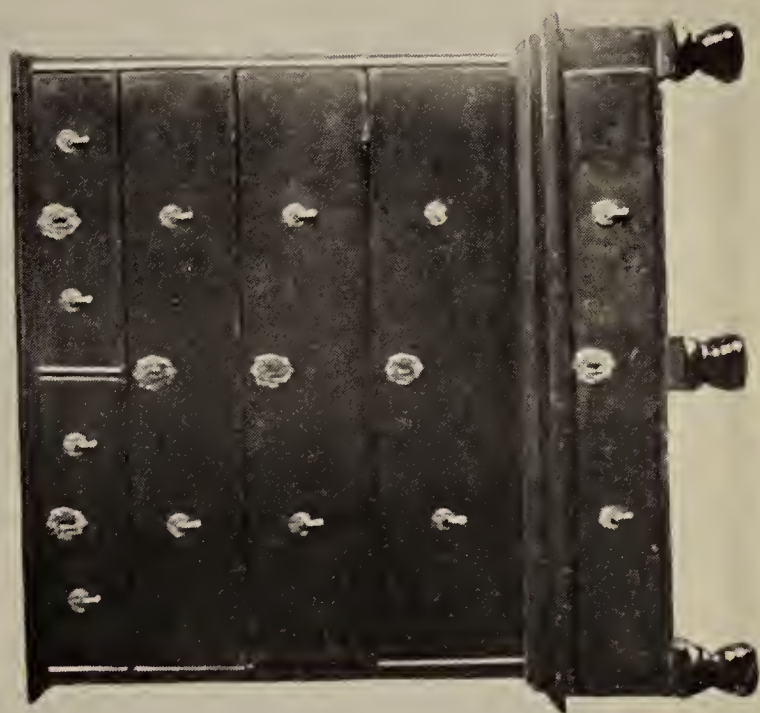
- (1) A sturdy chest of massive proportions dating from C 1680.
- (2) This fine tallboy has canted corners and bracket feet, indicating its eighteenth century origin. Its height is 6' 1½". Width 3' 6". Depth 1' 11". The handles are replacements. The slide with lower stage is furnished, is a very convenient feature in many of the double chests of the period. It is thought by some people that it is meant for brushing clothes on, but it appears to me that it is an extension of the small candle slides which were so usual at a rather earlier date and is meant for general utility purposes, whether for candles, writing or anything else.

The property of Messrs. Phillips, Ltd., Hitchin.





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think of nineteenth century designers they could make comfortable chairs."

If there are in the family any ardent workers with their needles, chairs of this kind afford scope for the display of their skill. The well-known Florentine stitch in brilliant colours would cover such a chair happily, without the close application needed for *petit point*.

A friend of mine had the extraordinary good fortune of obtaining the original *petit point* cover of a chair "thrown in" at the modest purchase price. She bought a walnut chair which had a new green linen covering, and having ordered it to be sent home it occurred to her to ask—

"What was the covering when you got it?"

"There was some kind of wool cross stitch cover on it, but it was very dirty and the seat was worn out."

"What did you do with it?" she asked, hardly daring to hope it had not been destroyed.

"Oh, it was thrown with the sacking and stuff we use for packing, I expect," he said. "I daresay I could find it." A search failed, however, to discover it. She nearly wept!

A few months later, however, she went into the shop again and the proprietor said:

"I have that old cover for you," and produced it. "It had been used to wrap round the legs of a table in a crate and has been returned with the empties."

It was, of course, both worn and torn, besides being exceedingly dirty. However, after a preliminary visit to the dry cleaners it was skilfully repaired and now shines out as a special treasure on its original frame.

It was curious that this particular man attached no value to this covering because almost all nowadays look for the "original needlework" under the present-day stuff, and finds in this direction are very rare.

Under paint, however, it is not uncommon to discover walnut veneer. I have myself bought thus two nice chests of drawers, one with really good shaped panels edged with black and white stringing, the other just an ordinary chest of drawers with herring-bone edges.

There are genuine "finds" and prepared finds. It is well to be prepared for these latter. We have all heard of the "salted" gold mine where a prospector finds on a claim a wonderfully rich piece of ore or heavy nuggets, which had been placed ready for him to dis-

cover. In a similar fashion wily salesmen have been known to cover modern badly finished walnut furniture with paint, knowing that sooner or later the "knowing" buyer will come along who will spot that under the stone colour or black exterior lies the desired wood.

It is, of course, far cheaper to cover up a faked chair or table with paint than to go to the trouble of imitating the effect of years of use and care, so he can sell the piece cheaply enough for the buyer to think he has a "find". The buyer is often in such a hurry to get away with his discovery that he does not examine it very carefully until he gets it home. When the paint is removed, of course, the take-in is apparent, but there was no warranty given and the bill probably describes it as "Painted Chair", so there is no chance of redress. Unscrupulous dealers have in this way been successful in getting rid of most obvious reproductions of gilt and silvered *torchères* and cabinet stands. Their raw gilding is covered with dull brown paint and the most expensive part of preparing a pseudo-antique for the market is in a few minutes obviated. It only remains to stand the piece where the paint may perish and weather a little and the object is ready for sale.



Another form of fraud is a "doctored" bureau. A bureau which dates from the early days of the nineteenth century, originally well made and veneered with mahogany on oak, but inkstained and knocked about may often be picked up at country auctions for a small price. In that condition it would be practically unsaleable, but to a skilful repairer it is a simple matter to strip off the remaining veneer and replace it with walnut. The veneer is often of good figure though weak in colour, but, of course, the flat fronted drawers and monotonous pigeon holes give it away at once to anyone who knows the infinite variety of the real thing.

I have seen bureaux thus treated several times in the Midlands, at Shrewsbury, Chester and Stafford, so I suppose there must be someone in those districts who finds such transformations a paying proposition.

Another ingenious "make over" is to cut off the top of a chest of drawers with its two top drawers and substitute legs for the lower part of the carcass. This is a method of using up an incomplete chest of drawers to advantage as a superficially attractive table results.

These efforts lack subtlety, and of course are only in the nature of what an Elizabethan

might have called "coney catching". They would not deceive a careful observer.

Needless to say such methods are only resorted to by unscrupulous dealers, and as a rule they are found to flourish best in fashionable health resorts, picturesque historic localities and seaside towns and other places where there is a floating population. Dealers under such circumstances in many cases do not look forward to making their money from a satisfied *clientèle* which returns to them again and again, but make their living by attracting the eye of passing tourists.

There are also copies of walnut furniture so accurate and so painstaking that they are calculated to deceive anyone but experts, and there are stories that even those august persons have been led astray.

But these copies demand such skilled craftsmanship in making and such intelligent selling that they must be very expensive and are hardly likely to appeal to the man of moderate means. It may, however, be mentioned that no detail is too small to be reproduced in these fine copies. The marks of use are all there. Below the lock are the scratches made by the bunch of keys as it swung round in unlocking, and dents and grooves—not enough to disfigure,

but just enough to emphasise the passage of years. A blot or two of ink, a lifted corner of veneer, a bit of beading replaced by mahogany, worn green cloth on the writing slab, nothing that cannot be put right with the utmost ease, but very convincing! And unfortunately I must confess that I can give no recipe for unmasking these really fine copies. Close study of undoubtedly genuine pieces and the most careful scrutiny of proposed purchases are the only methods which will be of any help. There is no royal road.

Another deceit practised by fakers is to obtain genuine plain walnut pieces and add to their superficial attractiveness by inserting panels of inlay on the tops and the fronts of the drawers. This is sometimes rather carelessly done, the inlay looking much newer than the body of the veneer. Sometimes, too, stains and scratches on the background stop short mysteriously at the edge of the inlay as if suddenly arrested.

One enterprising "improver" of a chest had only inlaid panels in light coloured wood and incised lines round a pattern copied from inlay. He had blackened this outline and filled in the design with suitably coloured stains. It might

be said that such a fraud would not deceive a child, but when I saw it it bore a label "Sold" in large red characters complete with name and address of the purchaser—or really one should say "victim".



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## CHAPTER XVI

### FORMS OF ORNAMENT

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**M**ARQUETRY is often called inlay and it certainly is inlay of a kind, but it differs so entirely from that made before the middle of the seventeenth century, both in the way it was done and the final effect, that it is really quite another thing, and it makes things plainer if it is called by another name. Early inlay was accomplished by carving out beds in the solid wood and setting into them small pieces of wood, generally of natural colour, lighter and darker than the ground. The pattern was thus inlaid into the actual construction. There was also a certain amount of what may be called "parquetry," which consists of a pattern built up out of bits of wood, ivory and such materials, set like mosaic or

tiles close together, the whole being generally bedded in a space cut in the solid or faced up with a moulding to form a bed. Marquetry differs from each of these methods, as design and ground consist of veneer, and the whole covering of the panel, drawer front, clock door, or whatever the object is, was applied at one time, the pattern having been prepared previously.

Unless one knows how it is done, it would seem a task more difficult than that of solving the most elaborate jigsaw puzzles, to place in their right positions all the hundreds of small bits which form the pattern on such a piece of furniture as a William and Mary table-top: such as PLATE XXIX. It is of course a tedious and delicate business, but it is one that calls for method and painstaking skill rather than the brain-racking worry of the puzzle solver.

The design is first made or traced as a master drawing which controls all subsequent procedure. The different colours or woods are indicated on this. A pricked chart is then made from this either with a tiny roulette or by a fine point by hand, leaving the outline marked by a row of tiny holes.

Through this the pattern is pounced by shaking over it a bag of very fine powder

## PLATE XXVI

## CHEST ON STAND

This is a somewhat uncommon dwarf chest of drawers. It is of English workmanship, made about 1680, in the seventeenth century. The drawer fronts are edged with a wide herring-bone banding, and the rich figure of the wood ornaments the front well without any further decoration.

*Height* 2' 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". *Width* 3' 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". *Depth* 2' 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

[V. AND A.]







generally of a kind which can be fixed by heat. This is secured either by means of a hot iron passed over it while protected by thin tissue paper or by placing it over a hot metal plate.

Several such pouncings are prepared, being superior to tracings for the purpose, as accuracy of repetition is more easily assured.

These (or such sections as may be required) are then pasted on to the top of two or three or more up to six layers of veneer, according to the number of repeats of the pattern wanted. In the case of a simple light on dark pattern, such as seaweed marquetry, the whole pattern can be cut at one time, the light and dark wood being sawn together by means of a fret saw. Thus if two layers of light and two of dark are cut together, it is obvious that by placing the dark patterns into the light grounds two complete designs are obtained while two more can be obtained with the exactly opposite effect by inlaying the light patterns into the dark ground (the counterpart or counter inlay) that is to say four in all. Sometimes one effect is used on the outside and the reverse on the inside of a door, or the two effects used on different pieces of furniture altogether.

The ground and the design are carefully fitted together and glued on to a paper backing and

the panel is ready for the cabinet-maker to fix to his work.

The elaborate floral marquetry such as PLATE XXIX is not so simply carried out.

In many cases there are numerous woods and shades of colour for the different parts of the pattern, some only occurring in small parts. These are numbered in accordance with the key and the sections in which they occur pasted on to wood of suitable colour, with the grain running in the wished for direction.

Each set of cuttings is put into a packet marked with the suitable number. When all have been cut the arrangement of the pattern on a glued paper on which the key is pounced is proceeded with. The cutting is generally so accurate as to need little adjustment. It will be noted that the pattern as it appears at this stage is in reverse to its final result, as the part which will be glued to the panel is now the top, and that which will be finally the surface is stuck to the paper which holds it together.

I am indebted for the above information to a member of a Dutch firm of veneer cutters. I am not sure that old marquetry was carried out exactly in this way, but he informs me that

in all essential details marquetry has been done in this way for two hundred and fifty years.

Marquetry designs used to be cut with a thicker saw than is used for modern work, leaving a tiny gap between the pieces, this was filled in with a black substance (mastic I think) which in some untouched specimens will be found to have either swelled or attracted dirt to such an extent that the outlines are raised. Repairers always want to clean this line off, but I think it is no disfigurement, and is a mark of the untouched condition of the work.

Ordinary domestic cleaning will modify it gradually without doing away with it entirely, as would be the case if the pieces were scraped.

The earliest type of marquetry on walnut occurs on pieces of Charles II furniture.

Most pieces of furniture decorated in this way are of the type that has few dovetails in the sides of the drawers, half-round mouldings between the drawers on the outside of the carcase, and pear-drop handles wired in place. Where the piece has a stand it has as a rule turned legs either twisted or bobbin pattern, or scrolled legs with ball feet. Such pieces have often floral marquetry reserves on a general ground of walnut veneer. The marquetry



panels are edged with three rows of stringing and in the earliest examples—which perhaps are somewhat doubtfully English—there are jessamine flowers of white ivory and leaves of ivory stained green. The flowers are sometimes rather loosely arranged in these pieces. Later the flowers are more closely arranged, the curves of the acanthus more graceful, and the whole design is more consistent. Much in the same style, but generally considered to be on the whole rather later, are those pieces which are covered all over with floral marquetry.

In many of the panels and table tops the general arrangement and whole “lay out” reminds one irresistibly of Persian embroidered covers and the Indian cottons which resemble them in many ways. These painted cottons were always achieved on a pounced outline, and I have sometimes speculated as to whether such a pricking may not have been imported among the curios from “the Indies”, in which the fashionables of the Restoration delighted, and formed the basis of these charming designs.

Contemporary with some of the floral designs (which were certainly made to some extent up to the end of the seventeenth century) but

marking a later fashion, is the fine scroll and arabesque work known as seaweed pattern. It was almost certainly inspired by the French inlay of brass and tortoiseshell known as "buhl" or "boulle" furniture from the name of the chief exponent of this method—André Charles Boulle.

Ornament of this nature is applied to pieces constructed in much the same way as those decorated with the floral marquetry, though on the whole pieces thus decorated show a finer finish, and more skill in the details of construction than those decorated with floral patterns. It does appear, however, a moot point whether these differences denote the passage of time, or to a considerable extent indicate the work of different schools or even groups of firms of cabinet makers working at nearly the same time, one set possibly deriving their inspiration from Holland and the other from France.

There is too a very considerable likelihood of the marquetry panels being made in a few special workshops and distributed to the cabinet makers, who attached them to the carcasses which they constructed, finishing and surfacing them to their liking. This, of course, is the plan adopted in a great many instances at the

present day, marquetry cutting being a trade as distinct from cabinet making as is French polishing or upholstering.

However this may be, it will probably be safe to say that the seaweed pattern, which, in its early days, was used side by side with floral marquetry, continued in use some years longer and went out of general use about 1695. It was made to some extent well into the eighteenth century, as we can judge by the construction of special pieces which are ornamented with designs of the seaweed pattern of extreme delicacy and beautiful workmanship.

*Veneer.* Practically all "walnut" furniture, except chairs, the legs of tables and the like, is constructed of some other wood and only faced with walnut. This is accomplished by means of thin sheets of walnut or other firm timber known as "veneer," which are glued to the surface of the constructional wood. It must not be assumed that this is done to avoid the expense of making the whole out of solid wood. In very many cases it would be far cheaper to adopt that course, but veneering allows of wood being cut across the grain, thus showing fine figuring and marking, making effects possible which could be obtained in no other way.



Old veneer is much thicker than that used commercially at the present day, but it must not be assumed that because thick veneer is used on a piece that it is, therefore, proved to be old. Specialists in the provision of cabinet makers' supplies will cut veneers to match any figure or thickness required. Most modern veneers are, however, cut with a circular saw, the old veneers being knife cut. After finishing, however, the marks of the saw are entirely removed from the face.

The principal walnut veneers were dark natural walnut, light or bleached walnut and burr walnut. There was also a kind of parquetry made of slices of small branches of walnut and other woods known as "oystering." Many other woods such as wych elm, yew and laburnum were used as veneers, and pieces veneered with these are often as beautiful as those on which walnut has been employed.

Different kinds of walnut veneer were often combined so as to form patterns on the tops of chests and tables. The arrangement and shape of the panels often corresponds with that of the floral marquetry with which they are contemporary. I have a chest of drawers mainly veneered with well-figured bleached walnut. The top has an oval panel and corner



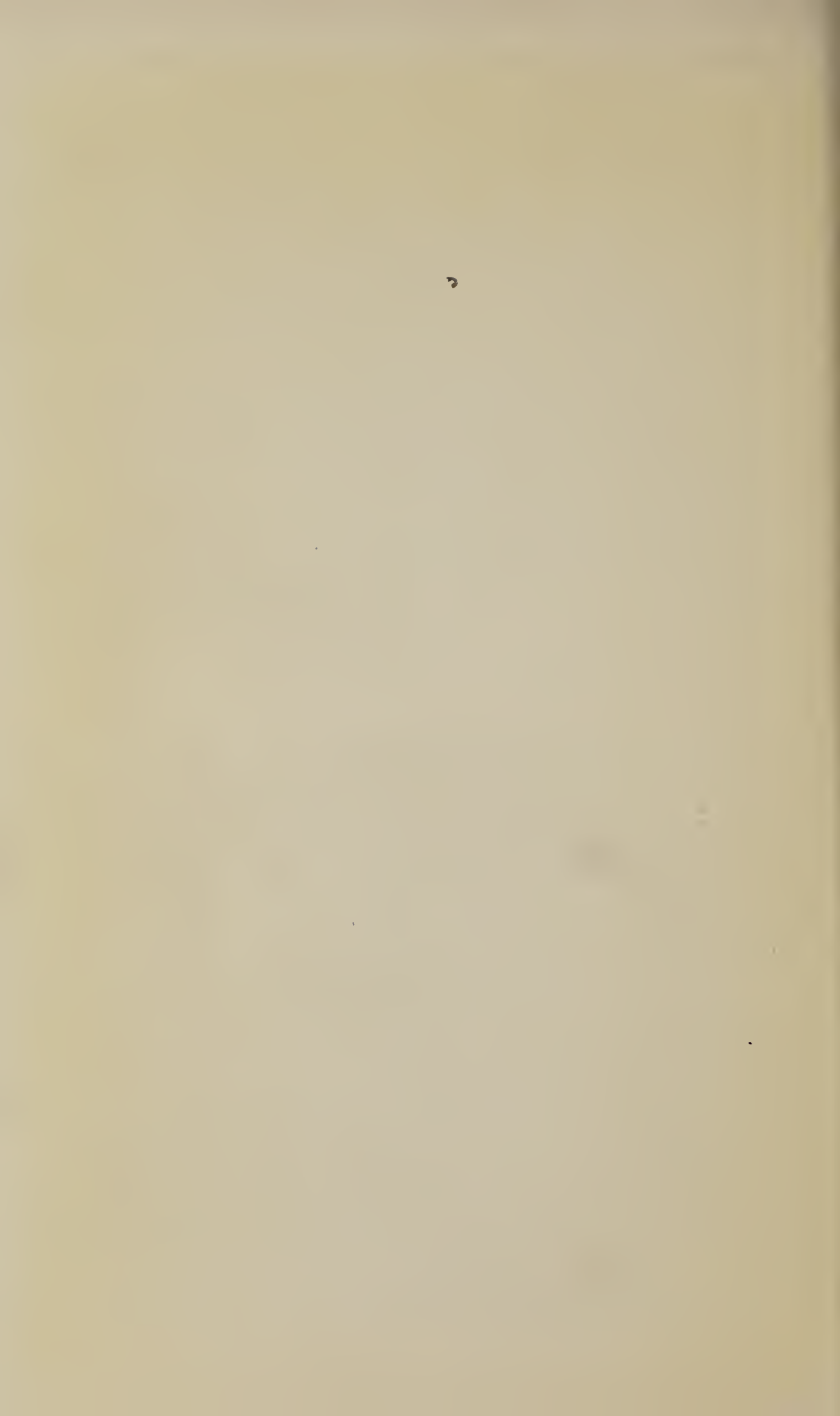
## PLATE XXVII

## MARQUETRY CABINET

Two views of a very fine cabinet dating from the very end of the seventeenth century or the beginning of the eighteenth.

The Property of Miss Scott.







pieces of fine burr walnut on a general ground of light, with cross banding of dark. The effect is very pleasing. The panels on the top are outlined with triple stringing, and oval shapes are outlined in boxwood stringing on the front in the same way.

These were probably really *inlaid* into the veneer. The general ground was veneered and the groove for the stringing cut afterwards, thus it was actually let in the surface, not applied in one with the general covering of veneer.

In many old pieces one can see, on close examination, a tiny round plug or filling, marking the centre point occupied by the stationary leg of the compasses or other device used in scoring the semi-circular ends of the panels. Pieces in which these centre points are observable generally are of early construction.

The veneer on many drawer fronts, even when composed of ordinary grained wood, is so arranged that the pieces alternate so as to make a waved or angular pattern.

Veneering is a somewhat tricky business, and unless carried out with care in every detail may part or blister according to whether it is stretched too much or not enough.



Blisters and loose pieces can be successfully refastened by skilled repairers with a minimum of damage to the surface even if very badly raised.

*Edge Banding*, in one form or another, is employed on nearly all walnut furniture with drawers. There are distinct classes of furniture on which these different varieties are used.

CLASS I is found on the kind of furniture with half-round mouldings on the carcase between the drawer openings, pear-drop handles and drawers which often run on bearers fixed to the sides of the carcase and divisions. Such furniture will almost always have the drawers edged with bands of veneer of stripe grained walnut cut at an angle of 45 degrees.

This band is often darker than the general surface of the drawer. It is most usually about an inch wide.

CLASS II is found on furniture having a double or treble beading on the carcase, solid-backed ball handles, and drawers bearing on the bottom boards. The feature of this furniture is the veneer of fine grained walnut, often "burr" in the best pieces and principal parts. The banding always included some form of "herring-boning" or feathering. This consists of two narrow strips of veneer, cut at an angle

of 45 degrees, laid together so that the stripes of the grain form a series of Vs like the bones of a herring's back or the plumelets of a feather.

In more elaborate pieces there may be several rows of such herring-bone alternating with plain bands, and having on the outside of all a plain band set at right angles to the edge. Stringing is not used.

It is hardly safe to state a universal negative, but pieces constructed as described under Class II were not enriched with floral marquetry. If such ornamentation were found it would be quite exceptional, possibly an addition at a modern date.

CLASS III. Pieces belonging to this class are often of fine, clear, golden walnut. The bail handles have cartouche shaped backs, there are dove-tails at the backs as well as the front of drawers, and runners on the bottoms of the drawers, which have a solid walnut lip let into the deal or oak front overlapping the opening, thus making it more dust proof. The veneer, which lies slightly higher than the lip, is edged with a cross-cut band at right angles to the edge.

CLASS IV, which overlaps the mahogany period, and possesses many of the characteristics of early furniture made of that wood, has a

“cock bead” glued round the edge of the drawer. This is slightly higher than the general surface of the drawer, and effectually protects the edge of the veneer.

To some slight extent the different types overlap, but on the whole the divisions are clear cut; I do not think however they are entirely “period” divisions.

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## CHAPTER XVII

### FURNITURE DESIGNERS, CABINET AND CLOCKMAKERS

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THE furniture of the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century which has come down to us is mostly the work of anonymous craftsmen.

The designer Marot, the carver, Grinling Gibbons, and Kent, the architect, are the most prominent names in connection with the furnishing of the splendid houses and palaces of the time: of the others very little is known. In a very few cases the name of the maker of a piece of furniture has been preserved, but nothing of the history of the owner of that name has come down to us.

There is at this period no outstanding personality such as that of the extraordinarily



successful tradesman, Chippendale, or the cultured and fashionable architect-designer, Robert Adam, to whom we can with any degree of certainty attribute (as we can to them at a later date) the actual making or designing of a large number of pieces and the inspiration of a great many more.

Clockmakers have, however, left far more records than their wood-working brethren, and we can point with the utmost certainty to the work of many great masters of the craft as they almost always signed their achievements. It must be remembered, however, that the signature applies to the mechanism alone and has nothing to do with the woodwork of the cases, which remain unidentified with any particular maker.

I have gathered together a few facts concerning some of the leading names, hoping they may be of interest. For further particulars reference should be made to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and *Watch and Clockmakers* (Britten) but of some of the names mentioned very little is known.

If any of my readers possesses a piece of furniture of the period bearing a name or a

trade-card or label this should be carefully preserved. May I say how very grateful I should be if such owners would be good enough to transcribe any such record and send it to me, with a description, photograph or drawing of the objects. It is only by means of a number of such records that we can hope to build up a clearer picture of the state of the furniture arts at this interesting but somewhat confusing time.

“MANSELL BENNETT. Clock maker.

Dial and Three Crowns.”

An elaborate marquetry cased clock bearing this name is in the Victoria and Albert Museum. C. 1685. The inlay is lovely, though, unfortunately, some repairs have had to be done to the plinth and the cornice.

He is known to have been in business 1685-99. (B).

SAMUEL BENNETT was a cabinet maker at the end of the seventeenth century. He is known by his work, which is very fine and beautiful. It is possible that he was a member of the clock-making family of Bennetts, who were in business at this time. If so, no doubt

## PLATE XXVIII

## BUREAUX

- (1) Bureau c 1785. Walnut veneer.

It contains "secret" drawers behind the pilasters on each side the centre cupboard. Other drawers are found over the pigeon-holes, the arched tops forming the fronts. The whole centre block of pigeon-hole drawers and cupboard can be removed in its entirety by pressing a wooden spring on the roof of the cupboard, small drawers are then disclosed which work sideways behind the outer pigeon-holes. There is also a well.

- (2) Kneehole desk c 1700. Walnut veneer.

Above a miniature bureau or base of a looking-glass. There is a falling front which can be used to enclose the pigeon-holes.





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he made the marquetry cases for their clocks, which are often very fine.

Illustrations of pieces which he made are to be seen on pages 375-6 of Ceskinsky's *Early English Furniture and Woodwork* in which the fine inlay is most accurately represented. The description of these pieces gives some idea of these most interesting examples of a great craftsman's work, but the photographs should be referred to if possible.

See page 386 *Early English Furniture and Woodwork*, Ceskinsky.

"A most remarkable china case covered with finely scrolled marquetry on the outer and inner surfaces of the doors, on the ends, and even on the rounded edges of the shelves, which have a sand-burnt laurelling cut in very stout veneers. The cornice and base are beautifully carved all from cross grain walnut. The upper doors inside and out are veneered with closely pieced small laburnum oyster pieces, the lower doors where the surfaces are larger, being covered with walnut in the same way."

The maker of the case has inlaid his name on the inside of one of the upper doors and his address "Monmouth Square" on the other (Monmouth Square was the old

name for Soho Square). The carcase work throughout is of pine, now painted a dull green.

The extraordinary bureau cabinet shown in Figs. 387 and 388 (of Ceskinsky's *Early English Furniture*) has enough of the classical element in the scrolled pediment, and the pilaster flanking the doors, to suggest that it is not entirely the unaided creation of the cabinet maker. The veneer everywhere is a finely figured or paralleled elm of a rich golden brown shade. The trussed corners of the "bombé" lower part, and the frieze and base of the upper stage, are the only portions which are decorated with marquetry.

On the inside of the door the pilasters of the outside are imitated in inlay and cross-banding and on the bases recurs the name of the Soho cabinet maker, "Samuel Bennett, London. *Fecit.*"

A beautifully made bureau by this fine craftsman is to be seen at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The cabinet work and decoration are both of very exceptional quality, every detail being carried out with the utmost exactitude. It has a curious lock which can only be unlocked by someone who understands its peculiar mechanism. Anyone unacquainted

with its working cannot open it even though possessing the key.

CORNELIUS COLE (also sometimes spelt Golle).

A cabinet maker working at the end of the seventeenth century. He made "a large table of Markatree the side drawer and supporters carved with ornaments of flowers and finely lackred" for Queen Mary in 1691. He also supplied other furniture to the Royal Palaces.

The name EDWARD EAST appears early in the history of clock-making. Clocks bearing this name are also found which cannot be earlier than the end of the seventeenth century, so that as "Edward East" was a member of the Clockmaker Company at its foundation in 1631, there may have been two—possibly father and son—who succeeded one another in business. Several clocks of very fine workmanship, including one with an ingenious arrangement by means of which it can be lit up inside at night, showing the time by a moving perforated dial, are amongst his productions.

AHASUERUS FROMANTEIL—TEL—TEEL.

There were several clock-makers of this peculiar name. The best known member of the family



appears to have sold his clocks at "Ye Mermaid of Lothbury" and to have had his workshop and house at the Bank side in Mosses Alley, Southwark.

Evelyn speaks of him as "our famous Fromanteel"—Diary Nov. 1, 1660.

He is said to have introduced the pendulum into England. One of his clocks may be seen at the Guildhall Museum, and several clocks are known made by the different Fromanteils, and they are all worthy of note.

GOLLE, see Cole *ante*.

No one can have failed to hear of GRINLING GIBBONS and his wood-carving. His work, however, hardly comes under the heading of "Walnut Furniture", or indeed under any general heading, as in the annals of English wood-working he stands alone. We may like his work or we may not, but no one can help marvelling at the wonderful dexterity displayed and the knowledge of his craft which underlies it.

He was a Dutchman born at Rotterdam in 1648 and died 1720.

His carving, which is often in limewood, copies Nature with extraordinary exactness,

and while apparently extremely fragile is really, by reason of the skilful planning, far less delicate than it looks. His work may be seen in the chapel at Windsor, St. Paul's Cathedral and Trinity College, Oxford, and many of the historic mansions. He also designed the bronze statue of James II in Whitehall, and executed a considerable amount of sculpture.

His work is extremely individual, and he was able to inspire his assistants with much of his spirit, so that even the largest of his undertakings forms a complete whole.

Auctioneers and dealers have a way of describing any high relief carving as "by" or "attributed to" Grinling Gibbons, but such claims may, as a rule, be discounted, unless the history is known, as most of Gibbons' work is recorded, and there is much foreign work which bears a superficial likeness to his.

GEORGE GRAHAM, on completing his apprenticeship in 1695, entered the service of Tompion, after whose death, in 1713, he carried on the business. Clocks are known signed "Tompion, Graham", so there appears to have been some kind of joint ownership or partnership before that date.

## PLATE XXIX

## MARQUETRY TABLE TOP

This very fine table-top is a typical though specially beautiful piece of late seventeenth century English marquetry. It is carried out in natural woods well selected as to colours and grain to suit the flowers and leaves represented. It is 3' 1" wide and 2'  $\frac{1}{2}$ " across. [V. AND A.]

The table itself is illustrated on Page 109, Figure 29.









He died in 1747, and was buried in Westminster Abbey in the same tomb as his old friend and employer. A slab marks their resting place.

His work, which is individual and accurate, is highly esteemed.

GILES GRANDET (or GRENDEY) is referred to by Percy Macquoid in *Country Life*, September 25th, 1915. He is there described as "one of the finest workers of this time; a refugee of French extraction living in St. John's Square, Clerkenwell, London, who was working as a chair and cabinet maker about 1730."

JOHN and PETER, GUMLEY. They appear to have been looking-glass merchants dealing also in other articles of house furniture.

In the accounts of John Hervey, Earl of Bristol, is an item showing that he bought China and Japan ware worth £29 from Peter Gumley in March, 1693. John Gumley advertised in the *London Gazette*, June 21st, 1694, "all sorts of cabinet work" and "Indian and English looking-glasses."

The name of "Gumley" is on one of the mirrors at Hampton Court—John Gumley seems to have died about 1727.

GERRIET JENSEN was a fashionable furniture maker of the period, working for Charles II, William and Mary and Anne. He was a Dutchman, and his name occurs in the Royal Accounts, first as given above and later in the English form Gerrard Johnson.

The "Annals of the Joiner's Company" gives his name as a member of that body. He paid a fine in 1694-95. In 1680 he sold a "cabinet and frame, table, stands and glasses," to the King, who gave them to the Emperor of Morocco.

He did a great deal of work for Charles II, who paid him large sums for furniture, some described as inlaid. An inlaid writing-table—with the Royal Crown and cypher "supported on gilt pillars"—figured in the accounts.

Under William and Mary he supplied many things, including tables and cabinets inlaid with metal. These may possibly have been made to designs by Marot who had been a designer in Boulle's atelier, this work, of course, being characteristic of Boulle.

He made the glasses and mirror frames in Queen Mary's gallery at Kensington Palace, though they were not delivered until after her death.



Queen Anne was his customer for gilt tables, stands and mirrors for her drawing-room at Saint James's. They cost her £450.

John Hervey, the first Earl of Bristol, also patronised him, buying in 1696 what was evidently a set of English "lacquer" furnishings.

"Paid Mr. Gerriet Johnson ye Cabinet-maker for ye black sett of Glass, table and stands and for ye glass over ye chimneys and else-where in dear wife's apartment, £70."

He was probably the most fashionable cabinet-maker of the day, and though we cannot actually identify them with him, was probably responsible for many of the gilt stands supporting the Chinese lacquer cabinets and the English reproduction cabinets which were so fashionable, as well as the inlaid furniture of the time.

There resided early in the seventeenth century in the parish of St. Thomas the Apostle, Southwark, near the Globe Theatre, Garaert Jansen or Gerard Johnson (b. 1616) who was a tomb maker. He executed the portrait bust of Shakespeare at Stratford-on-Avon. He had six sons and one daughter all born in England.



It is possible that our cabinet-maker was one of those sons or perhaps a grandson.

JOSEPH KNIBB was the best known member of a notable clock-making family: he was admitted to the freedom of the Clock-making Company in 1670, and is described in their records as "of Oxon". He, however, certainly did business in London for some time, and Mr. Britten mentions some clocks of his which are marked "Joseph Knibb at Hanslop", the village of Hanslope in Buckinghamshire being referred to; he may have lived there in his old age. His London address appears to have been "The Dial in Fleet Street".

LAURENT of MALINES was an excellent wood-carver. An assistant at one time to Grinling Gibbons, his work has many points in common with that of the greater man.

DANIEL MAROT was born in Paris in 166 ? He was the son of Jean Marot, an architect and engraver. He carried on his early studies under his father and Lepautre, and was employed in his youth in the atelier of A. C. Boulle.

The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, in 1685, led him to leave his native country and go

to Holland, where he entered the service of the Prince of Orange and acted as architect of the Audience Chamber at the Hague. He published an engraving of the great banquet given at the Hague in honour of the Prince by whom he was employed as Master of Works at Loo.

There is a general assumption that he came to England in William's train, but there appears to be no actual proof that he did so. His engravings of Hampton Court Palace may, of course, have been done from other people's drawings, though he signs them—*Architecte de roy de le Grandes Bretagne* and published a plan *Parterre d'Amton Court inventé par D. Marot*—and in my opinion, he most probably did come. Certainly what little has survived of the contemporary draperies and furniture is of a kind which might well have been inspired by him. He knew the wishes of the new rulers, and they would have confidence in his ability to carry them out.

When William and Mary came to the English throne they inaugurated a very different regime at Court to the era of extravagance and luxury which had previously prevailed.

Instead of the lavish personal expenditure of Charles II, which resulted in the disastrous

## PLATE XXX

## EXAMPLE OF MARQUETRY

This is a "reserve" forming the decoration of the left side of a marquetry mirror-frame. It is entirely worked in natural coloured woods, rosewood, ebony, sycamore, cherry and various other kinds being employed. The grain is arranged carefully in the body of the bird to follow the direction of the plumage. It is English work of the last twenty years of the seventeenth century.









shortage of money where public affairs were concerned, the taste of the new monarchs was for artistic simplicity in their private surroundings, while they determined at the same time to make provision for a display of regal state which, without involving any senseless expenditure, should be what was fitting for the entertainment and reception of foreign princes and ambassadors.

Hampton Court was enlarged and remodelled in accordance with their ideas. Sir Christopher Wren's work as architect is well known in connection with the alterations, and the part played by Grinling Gibbons is also recognised. The name of Daniel Marot is less familiar, but his share in the renovations at Hampton Court may have been an important one. William had a very strong leaning towards the style of decoration in vogue in France, and his affection for his native country by no means led him to adhere to Dutch manners and customs undiluted. So in Daniel Marot he found a suitable man for arranging and carrying out schemes of decoration in Holland and perhaps in England, which would meet his taste.

Marot was an engraver, sculptor and designer who had been employed by the French King on decorative work at Versailles, but being a

Huguenot he, like so many of his fellow countrymen of the same faith during the last quarter of the seventeenth century, quitted France and took up his abode in Holland, where, finding patrons among the nobility, he carried on his occupation with great success. He came under William's notice and was employed by him, styling himself: "Architect to His Majesty the King William III."

His published designs comprise many chimney-pieces, alcoves and other details of interior decoration. Many of them are chiefly concerned with arrangements of drapery trimmed with the elaborate galloons, tassels and embroidery then in vogue, and in these he follows mainly the French ideas of the same period, though they are perhaps tinged by his Dutch experiences. When fresh such upholstery must have been very magnificent, as the designs were carried out in the exquisite Italian velvets, damasks and other rich materials made of pure silk, which were so lavishly used in the decoration of the residences of Royalty and the nobility.

The actual furniture shown in the designs, however, is of a rather simple kind on the whole, and does not appear to have been very different from what was to be found in many of the smaller country mansions.



Some of the more magnificent guéridons and tables were covered with repoussée silver, and others were gilt, but their general construction was much the same as the plain wooden ones. The richness of the general effect must have been entirely owing to the fine draperies and hangings, and the woodwork of the chairs was only a framework for embroidery, and velvets with the large raised patterns so much in vogue. His designs for chairs, apart from those shown as part of the decorations of rooms, each have a stool to correspond. Two of them have carved framework, and the one other distinct pattern is a *chaise tournée*, the legs having the typical mushroom number so usual in English turned woodwork of this time. That Marot actually was the originator of this type is more than doubtful, he most probably was merely illustrating an already existing pattern of woodwork as being suitable for the framing of embroidery for chair-backs and seats of which he gives several examples; also possibly he wishes to show how to arrange the looped drapery shown on a small scale in other drawings of rooms.

Conspicuous objects in some of the designs in his books are examples of the glorious Chinese



lacquer cabinets on their carved and gilt stands which were so universally admired at this time. They began to be imported in fair numbers during Charles II's reign, and the examples which Marot draws may well have belonged to that king, as he had some splendid specimens which Pepys saw in his "closet".

The guéridons or candlestands are shown supporting many branched candelabra which, with the sconces, supplied the sole artificial lighting of these large rooms. The looking-glasses must have helped matters by their reflections, otherwise the draperies would have absorbed the greater part of the light.

Marot, as an expert in the upholsterer's art, was a great designer of beds, which at this date were extremely important—in fact one may almost say the *most* important pieces of furniture. They formed the principal objects in the chief rooms in every house, and palaces were no exception. The status of anyone could almost be judged by the number and splendour of his beds! Some of Marot's are indeed imposing, and if we find his chairs and stools simple, these grandiose erections are quite the contrary. They are extremely high, the plumes reaching to within a few inches of the ceiling of the lofty rooms

then in vogue. On this point much stress was laid.

Celia Fiennes in her "Diary" of her travels in England, written about this time, in which she records the splendour of the country seats she saw on her journeys, notes with disapproval that one bed she saw, though fine, did not reach within several feet of the ceiling. As bearing on the importance attached to beds at this period, it may be mentioned that they are practically the only furniture she mentions, and while she gives full accounts of them her allusions to other pieces are quite casual.

Of tables there are not many shown in Marot's drawings. The library table he illustrates must have been singularly inconvenient for its purpose, as there is no room for the knees of the reader who must have been at a considerable distance from his book.

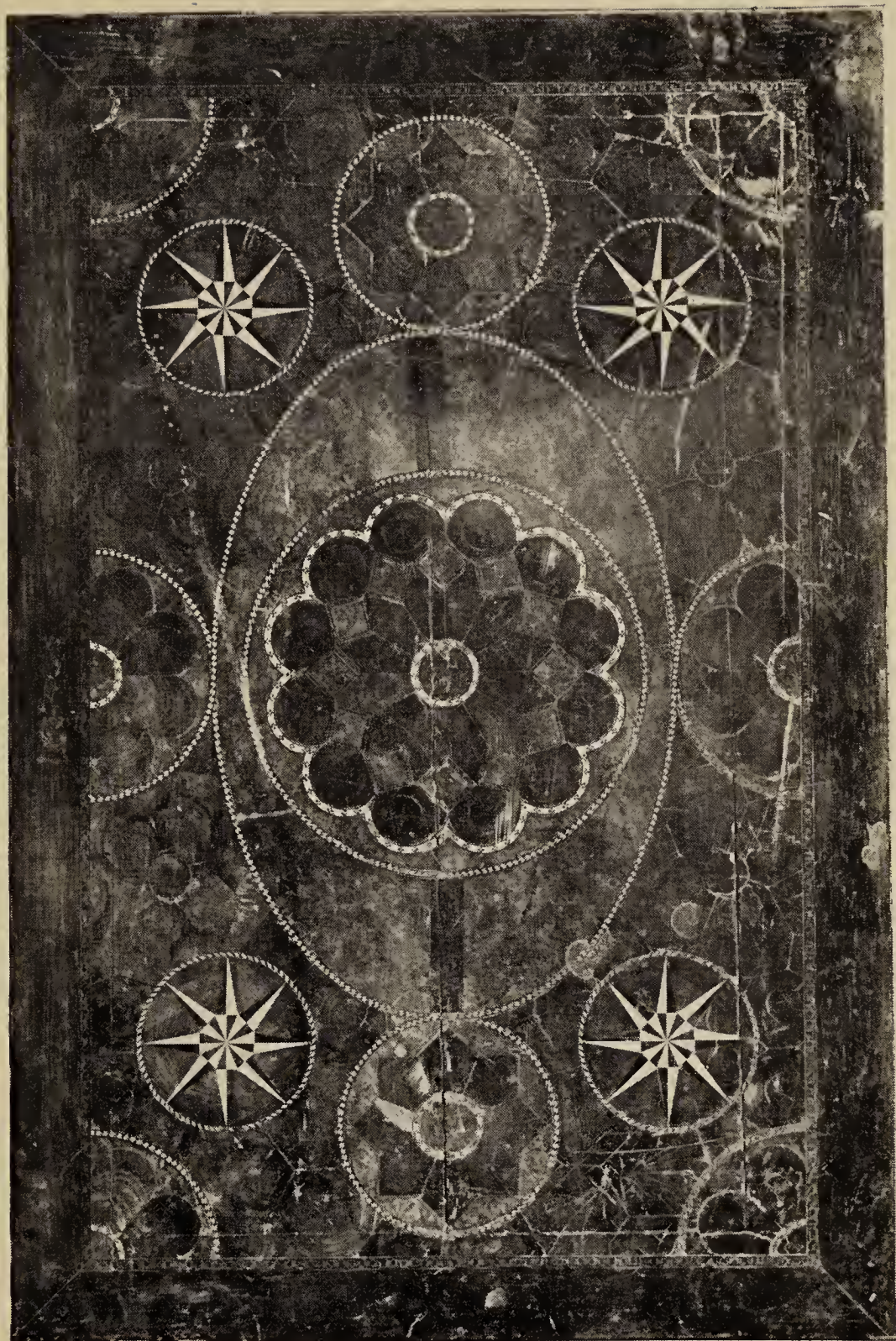
Of course movable furniture played a very small part in Marot's schemes of decoration. He saw his rooms as a whole, conceiving them as a rich background to the groups of courtiers in the formal and exaggerated dress then fashionable, who would move in them. We do not, therefore, find in his drawings any such record of contemporary woodwork applied to

## PLATE XXXI

## MARQUETRY

A table-top of English workmanship veneered with lignum vitæ, amboyna and other woods in geometric designs. Marquetry of this kind, without being exactly rare, is certainly more uncommon than either floral or scroll designs. The date of this table is about 1700. It is 3' wide and 2' 7" across.









general use such as we have for a later date in the books of Chippendale and Sheraton. The examples he illustrates are, however, important as they are among the very few contemporary representations of furniture of this date.

A name known to most people (though not always as a clock-maker) is that of CHRISTOPHER PINCHBECK. His invention or exploitation of an alloy of metals resembling gold in appearance has led to the term "Pinchbeck" being used to describe shams of every description; but he was a very good clock-maker and made elaborate musical clocks and other fanciful contrivances. He died in 1732. His sons Edward and Christopher also made clocks. Christopher Secundus died in 1783. There is an astronomical clock which he made at Buckingham Palace that has a tortoiseshell case and silver ornaments.

HENRY POISSON, Royal Exchange, London—1695-1720 (B).

In the Victoria and Albert Museum there is a fine clock bearing his name. It has an all over-pattern of elaborate scroll work carried out in rosewood and holly on a plane-tree ground.

The clock is of the early eighteenth century type. It much resembles another case in the same museum ornamented in a similar way with the same woods; this other clock is unfortunately minus its works, and the flanking pillars and its base have been cut down.

DANIEL QUARE was a contemporary of Tompion's. He made some very celebrated watches and many exceptionally fine clocks. The well-known example at Hampton Court Palace has as ornaments some charming little gilt figures, and illustrates the contemporary fondness for elaborate mechanism by three extra dials on the face. He made many clocks which run for a year or more, and was universally considered one of the foremost clock-makers of his time. He died in 1723.

THOMAS TOMPION is one of the great names in clock-making. He introduced many improvements tending towards increased accuracy and efficiency. He made several clocks which are triumphs in their particular way.

Some clocks which were made by him will go for a year at one winding, one such was made for William III, another of his fine

clocks is at Windsor Castle, and still another at the Pump Room, Bath. This, which was given in 1709, is an early example of an arched dial and may perhaps have started the fashion for them.

His work, needless to say, is of considerable value, and examples fetch extremely high prices.

He died in 1713 and is buried in Westminster Abbey.





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## GLOSSARY

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*Baby Cage.*—A contrivance for teaching children to walk without falling and hurting themselves. It consisted of a frame mounted on castors or wheels, from which rose turned supports on which another smaller frame was fixed which held the child under the arm-pits.

*Balusters.*—These are perpendicular supports generally of round section, but with an infinite variety of outline. They were used in the seventeenth century in the construction of many pieces of furniture, being used as legs of tables, chairs and so on and, in split form, for the decoration of dressers, chests and cupboards and other furniture.

*Beaufait*.—The eighteenth century writers generally spelt the word “buffet”, thus using it for a shelved recess for china and glass, which was sometimes enclosed with doors and sometimes open. They really were a kind of niche, but being broken up by shelves they lost that character.

The ordinary description of the “Yeomen of the Guard” as “Beefeaters” has sometimes been said to be a corruption of “Beaufetiers” or “Buffeters”, but they were called “Beaf eaters” long before either Beaufet or Buffet as synonymes for sideboards had passed into English use.

*Bolection Moulding*.—An applied moulding which is higher than the surface of the object it decorates.

*Bombé*.—A term used to describe a piece of furniture with a swelling front. A piece which is fully *bombé* projects not only forwards but also laterally.

*Bun Foot*.—A foot found on some Cabinets and Chests at the end of the seventeenth century.

*Cabriole Leg.*—This leg, which possibly originated in China, was, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, largely used on better class furniture.

*Candle-reserves.*—The wooden circles or squares at the corners of card-tables which were not covered with cloth but left as polished wood for candlesticks to be placed on.

*Cherry Wood.*—This is sometimes used for marquetry. It is reddish in colour with a close grain. "The Black Cherry is fit to make stooles with, Cabinets, Tables, especially the redder sort, which will polish well." John Evelyn. *Sylva*, 1664.

*Chests of Viols.*—This phrase means not only a box or chest which contains these instruments, but the instruments themselves.

Burney, *History of Music*: "Viols, of which it was usual during the last century for most musical families to be in possession of a chest consisting of two trebles, two tenors, and two basses." 1789 N.E.D.



*Chop Inlay*.—Inlay in which the bed is carved out of the solid wood of a panel or rail, such as is found in Elizabethan and early seventeenth century English furniture, and in late seventeenth and eighteenth century Dutch furniture.

*Clavichord*.—This instrument, the oldest keyboard instrument—was developed at the beginning of the eighteenth century into a delightful medium for rendering music of intimate and delicate character. It is *not* an incomplete pianoforte, but has a charming character of its own. Skilful players who have command of the instrument can obtain very delightful effects. The notes are produced by brass pins fixed in the keys which set the strings in vibration as each note is played. There are two or three wire strings tuned in unison to each note.

Johann Sebastien Bach wrote his “Fantasia Cromatica e Fuga” for this instrument.

*Columnar Supports*.—Those which are shaped to look somewhat like an architectural column.

*Coromandel Wood or Bombay Ebony.*—A striped wood dark in general effect. It has a fine close grain and polishes well.

*Dishes or Money Dishes.*—The sunken saucers or scoops in card-tables made to take money or counters. *N.B.* If using a card-table thus fitted for ordinary Philistine Bridge, it is well to point out that these are *not* ash-trays.

*Dowells.*—Are pegs or pins of wood which are employed to strengthen a glued joint.

*Dulcimer.*—A stringed instrument played with hammers. It stands on a table and in skilled hands the strings, by being struck repeatedly, give almost the effect of a sustained note.

*Edict of Nantes.*—Henry of Navarre gave permission on the 13th April, 1590, for the Protestants of France to worship unhindered and enjoy religious liberty. This edict was revoked by Louis XIV on October 18th, 1685. Previous to that date many of the most skilled workmen had left France for other countries, where they could

worship as they chose, as they found they were subject to many disabilities on account of their religion and the actual "Revocation" only accentuated the tide of emigration.

*Finial*.—An architectural term, also applied to the ornamental finish to any part of a piece of furniture such as the upright of a chair.

*Flageolet*.—A wind instrument of the flute tribe which was blown from the widest end. Pepys (March 1, 1666) in his Diary says: "Being returned home I find Greeting the flageolet master come and teaching my wife."

*Frieze*.—Strictly speaking a frieze is that member in the entablature of an order which comes between the architrave and the cornice, but it is also quite correct to apply the term to any horizontal broad band of ornament wherever placed.

*Furniture*.—This word is used in old inventories and wills in a different sense from that in which we use it now. It was



formerly applied almost entirely to textile hangings, such as curtains of beds and those of the walls. Woodwork was comparatively inexpensive compared with the gorgeous fabrics employed for these purposes.

*“Grandmother” Clocks.*—Miniature long-case clocks. They should be under five feet



FIGURE 45.

LACE BOX.

in height, preferable about 4' 6". They should be genuine long-pendulum clocks. Sometimes ordinary clocks have been put into these small cases.

*Inlay.*—Used as a rule for wood actually bedded in the surface of the solid wood, but also used for a small motif let into a large general surface of veneer as sometimes



happens with a star in the flap of a walnut veneered bureau.

*Lace Boxes* were the “band-boxes” in which gentlemen as well as ladies kept their neck and sleeve adornments. Fig. 45 is a charming lace box decorated with scroll marquetry in various self-coloured woods. The general ground, it will be noticed, is veneered with a cross section showing a fine ringed figure. It is  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches high,  $21\frac{1}{8}$  inches long and  $6\frac{3}{4}$  inches deep. It dates from the end of the seventeenth century. (V. and A.)

*Love-Seat*.—A kind of settee to seat two. This word has only been used thus comparatively recently.

*Lute*.—A musical instrument in great favour in the seventeenth century. It is in shape not unlike a very large mandoline, but is from three feet to three feet six inches in length. It was a very difficult instrument to play, but was so beautiful in effect that it held the lifelong devotion of those who were skilled executants. It remained in use until superseded by

the guitar and spinet in the eighteenth century.

*Marquetry*.—A kind of inlaid work in which the pattern and ground are both cut out of veneer and applied to a solid ground.

*Morine or Moreen*.—A fabric used for plainer bed hangings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was either all wool or wool mixed with cotton and was of one colour.

*Mortise*.—The hole which receives the tenon. Together they form the well known joint which is the basis of all joined furniture. They both have to be accurately cut or the work will not be firm.

*Mule Chest*.—A chest which has drawers below a box-like upper part; the name is a facetious one, meaning that it is a hybrid between a chest of drawers proper and a chest.

*Muntin*.—A central vertical division of a pane into two parts. It is used both of wood and cane panels.

“A central vertical piece between two panels, the side pieces being called stiles.”  
N.E.D.

*Mushroom Turning*.—A member in many William and Mary turned supports.

*Patina*.—A rather overworked word used to describe the effect of constant use and polishing on the surface of wood. It does not necessarily imply great age, though it does show that a piece was not made yesterday. Fifty years or less will supply a most beautiful surface.

*Pegs*.—These were used for fixing the tenons into the mortises of framed furniture and panelling. The expression “a square peg in a round hole” describes the actual method of using pegs in much early furniture; the hole was round and the rather larger square peg of green wood being driven forcibly had to conform to the shape of the hole. It generally received a slight twist in the process and so remained securely in place without either glue or nail.

*Petit-point*.—A stitch in needle-work which had canvas as its ground. The designs were of necessity somewhat stiff as they had to be built up of small squares, but this effect is less noticeable than in “*gros-point*” where the squares are about four times as large.

It was used in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for many purposes where woven textiles would otherwise have been employed, both alone and together with *gros-point*.

Chair-coverings, hangings and screens were often worked in this stitch which occupies one space of a single thread canvas.

*Pilaster*.—A column or other support which is attached to the surface of the piece of furniture at the back. It is often half round only or a flat rectangular shape.

*Pricking*.—A pattern prepared for tracing by piercing fine holes along the lines.

*Sand-burning*.—The shading of pieces of light wood by dipping it into hot sand. The



tones thus obtained shade from the lightest buff to a dark brown.

*Slats*.—The “rungs” of a ladder-back chair.

*Spandrel*.—An ornament in the space left when a curved outline is enclosed in a rectangular one, such as the corners outside the face of a clock.

*Spinnet*.—The Spinnet was an instrument played by means of a keyboard having a compass of about four octaves. It was a very favourite instrument in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Purcell wrote *Lessons for the Harpsichord and Spinnet*, which tells how it should be tuned.

Among the well known makers of spinets in the seventeenth century were Stephen Keene, Charles Haward and Thomas and John Hitchcock.

*Spinning-Wheels* were in constant use in the seventeenth century. That illustrated (Fig. 46) is early eighteenth century in date. Gentlewomen then still spent a portion of their time in spinning, though it was no

longer one of the principal occupations of unmarried women, as it had been earlier.

This is a graceful and charming example.



FIGURE 46.

WALNUT SPINNING WHEEL (V. AND A.).

It is 3' 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ " high and the diameter of the wheel is 12". (V and A.)

*Spiral Turning.*—The other name—barley- sugar turning—describes it well and distinguishes

it from the close twist or cable turning of later times.

*Splat*.—The central portion of a chair back.

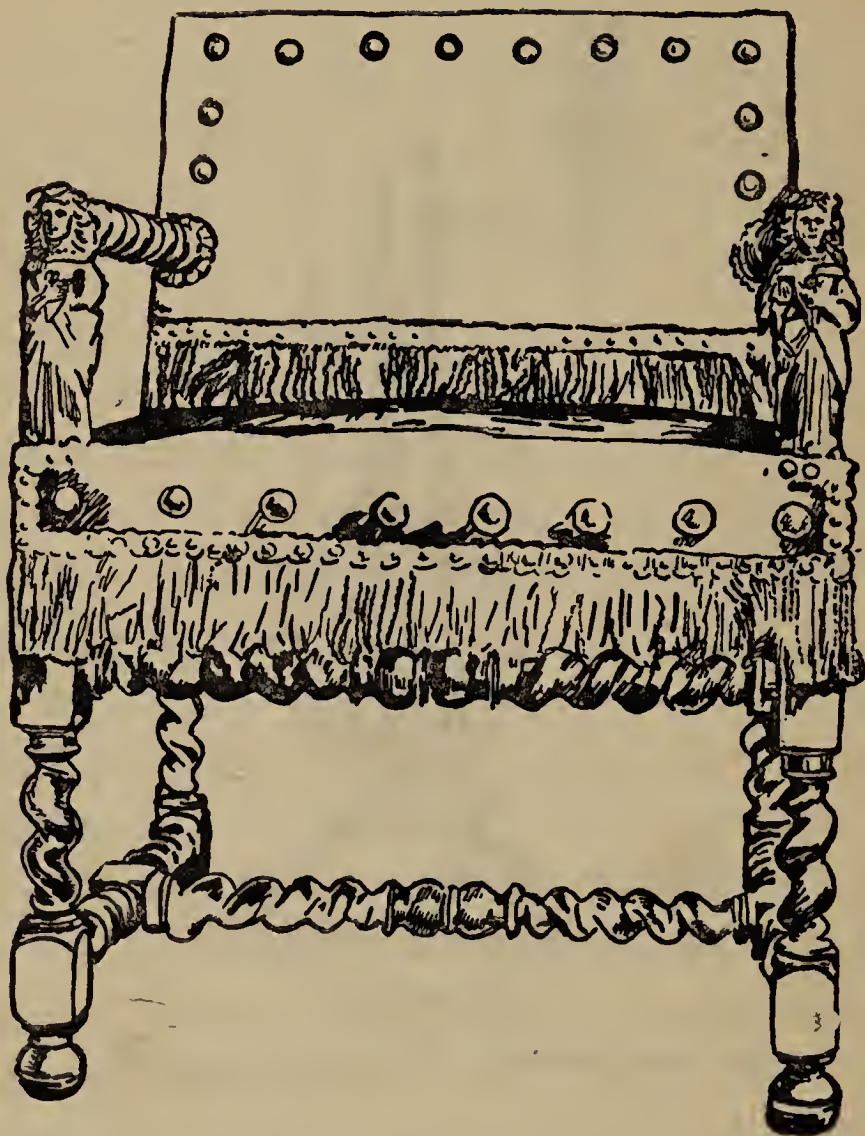


FIGURE 47.

LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY CHAIR LEGS WITH SPIRAL TURNING.

*Splayed*.—The term used when the back or bottom of a piece of furniture is wider

than the front or top so that the general outline is that of a truncated cone. Legs of a chair or stool are said to be splayed if they slope outwards towards the ground.

*Squab*.—This word is also spelt sqob, squob, squobb — A fat cushion. 1687 — *Mière* French Dictionary gives as the translation of “A Squab or very soft Cushion” — *coussain fort mou*. It also has another meaning of a sofa or ottoman, presumably those upholstered Jacobean seats which are so very like the modern Chesterfield.

*Verney Memoirs*.—1664 (1907 Edition) “For a drawing-rome I should have 3 squobs and 6 turned woden chairs of the haith of the longe seates.” N.E.D.

Robinson Crusoe made himself “a squab or couch with the skins of the Creatures I had killed and other soft things.”

The modern upholsterer generally understands by a “squab cushion”, one which has sides let in mattress-wise, but this does not seem to have been the case formerly.



*Stile*.—The vertical bars of any wooden framing into which the sides of the panel are fixed. Some authors spell this word *Style*.

*Stringing* consists of narrow lines of wood of the thickness of veneer. They are cut to the width required by means of a cutting gauge and during the walnut period were usually inserted in grooves cut after the veneer had been laid. They are generally of black and white wood.

“*Table Moulding*.”—Rounded mouldings which are worked between the flutes of a column, generally to about one-third of its height.

*Theorbo*.—A later instrument than the lute, but of the same tribe. It was constructed so that chords could be played on it. It came into use early in the seventeenth century. John Evelyn was a performer on the Theorbo and took lessons while on his European tour.

*Thermed—leg or foot*.—One which is rectangular in shape and tapers towards the bottom.

*Till or Purse* was a compartment fixed at one end of a chest to keep any small articles which would be likely to be mislaid if mixed with the general contents. They were no doubt often used for money, but they were seldom any safer than the chest, as they had no separate lid or fastening. There was sometimes a slot over the till so that money could be put in without opening the lid.

*Twist Turning*.—Legs of chairs, tables and stands often incorporate a length of twist or spiral turning. There are many varieties, such as “Single Bine Twist”—an open spiral of rather elongated spacing resembling a single strand of untwisted wool. “Double Bine”—two such strands twisted together. “Tapered Bine” which, as its name denotes, tapers toward the top. “Point Twist”, a double twist in which one strand is almost acutely angular on the outside, and “Double” and “Treble Open Twist” which resemble two or three strands twist round each other. Others combine twist turning with “bobbin” turning as the stretchers of the Chair in Fig. 47.

*Veneer*.—Extremely thin sheets of wood applied to the surface of thicker wood to enhance its appearance.

*Viola da Gamba* was the bass viol, two trebles, two tenors and two basses forming a complete set (or 'chest') of viols. It was held between the knees. The proper spots for placing the fingers in stopping were usually marked by fretts. The fingering is much the same as that of the lute.

*Viola d'Amore*.—An instrument, not unlike a violin in shape but larger, which was much admired in the seventeenth century. It was played with a bow, and had the peculiarity of having wire strings below the gut ones. When the gut ones were played on, the wire strings vibrated sympathetically. It took the place in a quartet now given to the viola, being the tenor of the set (or "chest") of viols.

*Virginal*.—A musical instrument played by means of a keyboard. The strings were plucked by a plectrum mechanically. The number in use in the seventeenth century must have been immense, as Pepys says,

referring to the removal of household goods by river at the time of the Great Fire, September 2, 1666: "I observed that hardly one lighter or boat in three, that had the goods of a house in, but there was a pair of virginals in it."





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